

NATURE'S CLASSROOM HAS NO WALLS

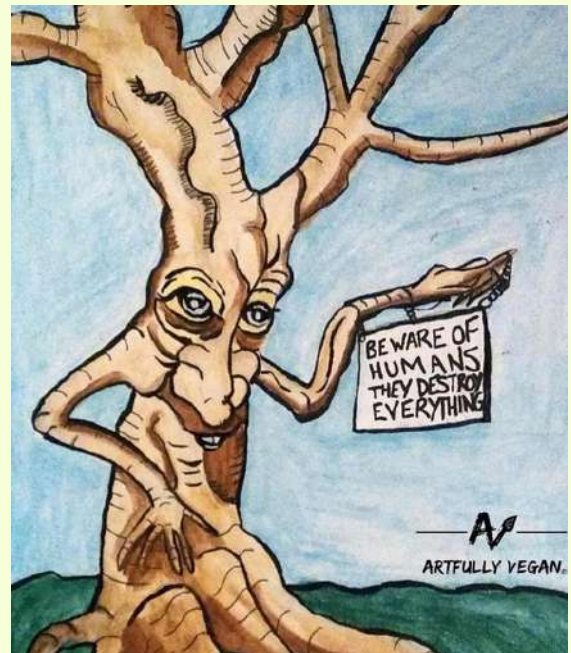


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PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MONTH



How do you feel about our work for nature conservation.

[SEND FEEDBACK](#)

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April Schedule

Day	Activity
07/04/2024	<u>Nature Walk</u>
14/04/2024	<u>Play Date</u>
21/04/2024	<u>Nature Walk</u>
28/04/2024	<u>Forest Spirit Learning</u>

[Click Here for More Details and Registration](#)

Memes Of The Month



Nature Talks Podhcast

Let's Talk About Nature!

[Listen Now on Spotify](#)

[Watch now on Youtube](#)



Nature Talks Podhcast, hosted by Verhaen Khanna, recently featured an insightful episode with Sahil Sharma, hailing from Punjab and founder of the NGO, Salute the Trees Trust. The episode delved into the critical issue of tree conservation in Delhi and Punjab, shedding light on the alarming situation and discussing potential solutions. Sharma's profound expertise and passionate advocacy for environmental preservation were evident throughout the conversation.

As they explored the challenges facing tree conservation efforts, listeners gained a deeper understanding of the intricate interplay between urban development and ecological balance. Sharma's organization, Salute the Trees Trust, emerged as a beacon of hope, actively engaged in grassroots initiatives to protect and nurture the region's greenery. The episode served as both an eye-opener and a call to action, inspiring listeners to join the movement towards a greener, more sustainable future for Delhi, Punjab, and beyond.

[Saving Trees in Punjab - Ft. Sahil Sharma](#)

NDNS Nature Walk



[Watch Video](#)

In an effort to foster a deeper connection with nature, NDNS organized a captivating nature walk through Sanjay Van.

The event aimed to bring people closer to the natural world, fostering appreciation and understanding of the environment.

Amidst the lush greenery and tranquil ambiance of Sanjay Van, participants embarked on a journey of exploration, learning, and rejuvenation.

They immersed themselves in the beauty of the forest, discovering its diverse flora and fauna.

Through this initiative, NDNS endeavors to inspire a sense of stewardship towards our precious natural heritage, nurturing a sustainable future for generations to come..

NDNS Play Date



[Click to watch video](#)

NDNS Delights Young Explorers with Nature Play Date at Nehru Park.

Children reveled in the wonders of nature at Nehru Park during an enriching play date organized by NDNS .

With activities like tree climbing and nature walks, kids embarked on a journey of discovery and adventure.

Amidst lush greenery, they learned about the importance of conservation and biodiversity, fostering a deeper connection with the environment.

Laughter filled the air as friendships bloomed and imaginations soared.

The event not only provided a fun-filled day but also instilled values of environmental stewardship and appreciation for the natural world.

It was a heartwarming success, leaving lasting memories for all participants.

Canine Carnival Holi 2024



[Watch Video](#)

NDNS, Straybuddy, Miripret, and other organizations collaborated to host Canine Carnival Holi, celebrating compassion towards animals. Attendees engaged in fun activities to strengthen bonds with pets and strays. The initiative highlighted the importance of extending kindness to all creatures, promoting support and well-being beyond the festive season.

Tree Climbing Birthday



[Watch Video](#)

In a harmonious blend of celebration and conservation, NDNS recently orchestrated a memorable birthday event immersed in nature's embrace.

Enthusiastic friends and family embarked on a captivating nature walk, exploring the serene beauty of local flora and fauna.

Amidst laughter and joy, the highlight of the day was a thrilling tree climbing activity, where both young and old found themselves scaling lofty branches, forging unforgettable memories high above the ground.

Beyond the festivities, the event underscored our commitment to environmental awareness and appreciation.

It served as a poignant reminder of the profound connection between humanity and the natural world, fostering a spirit of stewardship and respect for our planet.

Our Instagram updates



[Help Delhiites to live healthier happier lives.](#)



[Birthday in nature!](#)



[If you see something, you should do something. Delhi Fire Service save the day!](#)



[Canine Carnival Holi 2024!](#)



Our Instagram updates



[Untangling the mystery of Spear Grass.](#)



[Transparent layers of Mica crystals found under Delhi](#)



[New Lapel Pin out right now!
Which are your favourite?](#)



Our Instagram updates



[New fridge magnets available for purchase!](#)



[Playdate @ Nehru Park](#)



[Nature Walk @ Sanjay Van](#)



[Behind the scene of making NDNS Bird Card Games](#)



Our Instagram updates



[Nature walk with IIAD design students, pt. 1](#)



[Nature walk with IIAD design students, pt.2](#)



[Insect Hotel DIY](#)



[How does Hyacinth float?](#)



Trees set on fire in R.K. Puram



Our team found that trees in R.K. Puram were being intentionally set on fire. We rang up the Delhi Fire Service and Forest Department of Delhi for help. The FD of Delhi didn't take our call. However, Delhi Fire Service team showed up in less than 20 minutes and sprung to action immediately. They were able to put out the fire, but we ended up losing some trees permanently, while some of them were left with badly burnt trunks.



Important Articles Of The Month

Stop tree felling at Mankonda: HC

L. RAVICHANDER
HYDERABAD, MARCH 27

A two-judge panel of the Telangana High Court comprising Chief Justice Alok Aradhe and Justice Sujay Paul on Wednesday directed the Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, Head of Forest Force (HoFF) and other authorities, not to cut remaining trees at Mankonda Cricket Ground without leave of the court. The panel comprising Chief Justice Alok Aradhe and Justice Sujay Paul is dealing with a PIL pertaining to cutting 40 fully grown trees around the Mankonda Cricket Ground which were translocated in 2017 from Kakatpally to make way for the flyover between JNTU and Kakatpally Housing Board area. A PIL was filed by the VATA Foundation, an NGO that helps in the translocation of trees, questioning the action of the Commissioner of Mankonda Municipality, the Commissioner and Director of Municipal Administration of Mankonda Municipality and the Vice Chairperson of Mankonda Municipality for cutting 40 translocated trees

without due permissions. It was contended by the respondent authorities that a 100 trees were required to be cut down on which 70 trees were translocated and only 40 trees were cut down. A report was submitted for the same which was given due authorisation with the signature of the officer. In view of the same, the court directed the respondent authorities not to chop the remaining trees without the leave of the High Court and ordered notice to the respondent authorities.

CONSIDER PERMISSION FOR BOOK RELEASE FUNCTION, COPS TOLD

Justice C.V. Bhasker Reddy of the Telangana High Court on Wednesday directed Medchal district collector to consider the representation made by Ankam Shankar seeking permission to conduct a meeting on March 31, for the unveiling of a book titled 'Matham Maravatha Oka Alochana'. The judge was dealing with a writ plea challenging the rejection of permission to conduct a meeting. It is the case of the petitioner that such re-



LEGAL STORIES

jection was without assigning any reason and is illegal. Earlier, the court had directed the government pleader to obtain written instruction from the concerned officials. Today, the judge after perusing the instruction directed the petitioner to move an appropriate application before the district collector and made it clear that if an application is made the same shall be decided in accordance with law.

MARUTI SUZUKI CHALLENGES PACKAGING STATUS IN HC

Justice S. Nanda of the Telangana High Court on Wednesday granted interim protection to Maruti Suzuki India in an order passed by the Controller of Legal Metrology. A writ plea was filed by Maruti Suzuki challenging an order passed by the Controller of Legal Metrology contending

that a notice was issued to them that wholesale packages must be treated like retail packages and the labelling must differ. Counsel appearing on behalf of the petitioner contended that the notice further stated that a penalty would be imposed if the labelling is not changed from wholesale package to retail package. He further contended that a distributor functions as an intermediary and no penalty can be imposed on Suzuki as per the Legal Metrology Rules regarding declaration to be made on every package. The judge directed an interim stay on the notice issued to Suzuki and adjourned the matter to April 11.

PRESCHOOL TOO WOULD REQUIRE A TRADE LICENCE, HC

Justice T. Vinod Kumar of the Telangana High Court on Wednesday granted a week's time to M/s Inky Palms Daycare and Early Child Learning Centre to obtain a trade licence to operate in the locality of N/AJBER St Properties at Gachibowli, Hyderabad. It is the case of the petitioner, M/s. Inky Palms

Daycare and Early Child Learning Centre, that the said day care preschool is located at a villa and that the GHMC issued two notices to vacate the day care from the premises as it did not have a trade licence to function as a day care preschool. It was the contention of the petitioner that an explanation for the notice was already submitted which was not considered. The petitioner contended that the school does not require a trade licence as it operates for kids below the age of six years and the same cannot be considered as trade to obtain a trade licence. On the other hand, it is the contention of the GHMC that the said school cannot operate without a trade licence and the preschool in their reply sought time to vacate the premises. The court after hearing both the parties permitted the petitioner preschool to approach GHMC for obtaining trade licence. The judge however made it clear that if the petitioner fails to comply with the same the corporation can take necessary action.

HC seeks Army reply on 'axing of trees' in Ridge

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Delhi High Court on Friday asked the Army to respond to allegations that it had cleared a "huge chunk" of green patch on Central Ridge in the cantonment area of the city.

Justice Tushar Rao Gedela, while dealing with a petition for preservation and conservation of the Ridge, asked the competent officer of the Army unit stationed there to file an affidavit and advised the military not to undertake any activity that may result in deforestation.

While central govt counsel denied tree-felling by the Army, the judge suggested that ameliorative measures such as afforestation be carried out in the area, saying, "In Delhi, every tree planted is more valuable than gold."

The high court sought the stand after amicus curiae in the matter, lawyers Gautam Narayan, Prabhsahay Kaur and Aditya N Prasad, told the court that they visited the area last month and found patches of land of about 25 acres cleared of all vegetation and trees without permission.

Central govt counsel appearing for the Army unit said that although the force was undertaking renovation of an already existing boundary wall, there was no tree-felling. The lawyer informed HC that the commanding officer had even sent a reply to the tree officer after a show cause notice was issued to him.

"Before any order is passed, it appears apposite to ask the Army unit present in the area to respond by filing an affidavit," the court said. "In the meantime, it would be advisable to not carry out further steps that may result in deforestation in Central Ridge," it added.

The court asked the tree officer to take a decision on the basis of the reply filed to the show cause notice within one

While central govt counsel denied tree felling by the Army, the judge suggested that ameliorative measures such as afforestation be carried out in the area

week and asked Delhi govt counsel to file a status report.

In a note submitted to the court, the amicus curiae said that an analysis of Google Earth imagery showed a "large parcel of barren contiguous land within the confines of the Central Ridge with vehicle tracks marked" and a site visit was scheduled last month. "It was observed that the area in question was situated inside the Army Polo Club/Grounds at the east edge of the perimeter. Multiple patches of land have been cleared of all vegetation and barbed wire fencing has been installed along the perimeter," the note said.

Centre has no details of panel report on deemed forests: RTI

Byasheen Ranaol
www.indianexpress.com

NEW DELHI: The Union environment ministry does not have details of the state expert committee reports which identified so-called deemed forests in every state following Supreme Court's 1996 order in TN Godavarman vs Union of India matter, according to information received under a right to information or RTI application.

The Supreme Court, in that December 12, 1996 order directed that each state government constitute an expert committee within a month to identify areas within the forest areas which are "deemed" forests as per the dictionary meaning, irrespective of whether they are notified, recognised or classified under any law, and irrespective of their ownership.

Retired IAS officer, former principal chief conservator of forests (PCCF) Kerala, Pratikri Srivastava in January 03 year sought the names of all states that have submitted state expert committees as directed by SC in 1996, and copies of all state expert committee reports prepared as per direction of SC. In response to the query, the environment ministry, on January 05 said: "The requisite information is not available in the Forest Conservation division of the Ministry. Accordingly, a copy of the application is hereby transmitted under section 0 (3) of the RTI Act of 2005 to the PIO, O/o PCCF all states/UTs to furnish information directly to the applicant, as available with them."



Attach of petitions were filed by retired IPS officers and others.

Srivastava filed another RTI query on January 20 which sought the latest updated GIS maps for all states and UTs containing the district wise details of the location and boundary of each plot of land that may be defined as forest for the purpose of forest conservation act 1980; whether a GIS based decision support database was created as directed by the SC, and if so, a link to that; and all geo-referenced district forest maps with details of areas identified as forests in compliance with the 1996 order. However, the website did not provide geo-referenced maps of these forests according to Srivastava.

To this, the ministry, in a response dated February 1 stated that it "in collaboration with the Forest Survey of India has prepared a GIS based decision support system which forest layers among other layers such as hydrological layers, wildlife corridors, landscape integrity etc have been embedded. The in-

formation is available in the public domain and can be accessed at <https://parivest.nic.in/kys/#/>. Further as per requisite information in State/UT specific, therefor as regards to the revenue forest areas or other forest lands, not covered within recorded forest areas of the PSI may be obtained from state government/UTs."

Interestingly, in the report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Forest Conservation Amendment bill 2023 submitted in Lok Sabha in July last year, the ministry stated that "deemed forests as identified by expert committees of the states, have been taken on record and hence the provision of the Act will be applicable in such lands also." This gave the impression to several environmental groups that the data was already available with the union environment ministry. The FC Amendment Act or the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvahan) Adhiniyam 2023 was passed last July. One of

the most contentious provisions of the Act is that it removes the protection that unrecorded deemed forests that far enjoyed under the 1996 judgement.

A batch of petitions were filed by a group of retired IPS officers and former bureaucrats against several contentious provisions of the amended Act.

The SC on Monday issued an interim order that has effectively suspended what experts and activists said were dilution of environmental protections for forests in a law enacted by the government last year. The court ordered that states and Union territories need to go by the dictionary definition of the word forest to determine whether any work can be approved on any land, asked the Union government to seek details about what lands have been identified as forests in the local sense (in keeping with a 1996 ruling), and that no zones or affidavits can be set up in such areas unless the court's approval has been secured.

All states and UTs must comply with the directions by forwarding the reports of the expert committees by March 31, 2024. These records shall be maintained by the MoEF and shall be duly digitised and made available on the official website by April 15, 2024, the bench said. It further stated that the expert committees which are constituted as per rule 16 of the 2023 FC Rules shall duly include data of the 1996 SC reports by the previous expert committees formed as per the Godavarman judgement. The court added that

the expert committees formed as per the 2023 rules will be able to expand the ambit of forest lands which are worthy of protection.

This is an amazing order because SC has said that all state expert committee reports on forests including unclassified forests are to be compiled by the MoEF within two weeks and geo-referenced also as per the 2001 Lafarge order in the 2023 Godavarman case. These geo-referenced maps of all forest have to be put in the public domain by 15th April 2024.

When I sought these reports under RTI, I was told that the information is not available with the Ministry. This is shocking when the Ministry has stated before the Joint Parliamentary Committee that the SEC reports have been taken on record and the amended Act will be applicable to the land also. It is really horrifying that the Ministry has made such false assurances which have resulted in changing the conservation regime of the country through the amended Act without even examining the State Expert Committee reports. Considering the low poor quality SEC reports that have been sent by us, it is to be seen what the next steps of the Ministry will be in pursuance to the SC order today. Pratikri Srivastava retired IAS officer said on Monday following SC's interim order the Ministry did not respond to RTI's queries on the court's Monday order.

Important Articles Of The Month

HC implements SOP to deal with tree offence under DPTA

GREEN GUIDELINES

- > Delhi Preservation of Trees Standard Operating Procedure, 2023 implemented by HC
- > Will help in responding against complaints under Delhi Preservation of Trees Act, 1994
- > Quick Response Teams (QRTs) to be formed. Will stop offence, collect evidence and detain suspects
- > Beat officer to record complaint, investigate, detain, send notices and take other legal actions
- > Dedicated mobile app & website, forest stations and prosecution cell to be established

ACTION PLAN

On receiving complaint via helpline and/or website, notification to be sent to forest control room or beat officer

QRT & forest officials concerned to be equipped with: Body protector, wireless set, public address system, GPS set, handheld video recording device, medical kit, fire extinguisher, evidence collection kit, etc

STEP 1 Forest control room ensures response

- 1 If response not initiated, headquarters-level QRT is dispatched
- 2 If QRT also not available, forest control room will inform police

STEP 2 Divisional control room checks with beat officer for response

- 1 If response not initiated, divisional QRT is dispatched immediately
- 2 Divisional control room to inform police if needed

STEP 3 Beat officer informs divisional control room about the action

- 1 If beat officer fails to respond, range officer is intimated
- 2 Beat officer may also call divisional and forest control rooms for urgent help

GREEN GUIDELINES

New Delhi: In the absence of a standard operating procedure with Delhi forest department to act against a tree offence or a complaint under Delhi Preservation of Trees Act (DPTA), 1994, Delhi High Court has ordered a draft SOP to be implemented.

According to officials of forest department, tree activists and experts, Delhi didn't have a roadmap or protocol to be followed while dealing with tree offences so far. There were also no guidelines for an ordinary citizen to proceed with for protection of trees.

The order followed an old petition that led to submission of a draft SOP prepared by forest officials and experts, in Delhi High Court in 2022. The SOP now implemented but yet to be notified by Delhi govt, was accepted and implemented by HC, until the time Delhi govt notifies it or brings in amendments.

The single judge bench of Justice Jaemset Singh stated that the SOP only sought to streamline the processes mandated under DPTA. It pointed out that the court had, earlier on July 12, 2023, highlighted the urgency of the matter as "GNCTD has no guidelines whatsoever for ordinary citizens and also there is no roadmap as to how they should proceed with respect to protection of trees and in implementation of DPTA".

It stated that the SOP had been notified with only one aim that "the objectives of DPTA are to be achieved".

The order also pointed out that since July 2023, Delhi govt had been "considering the said SOP and only indicating that they are in the process of implementing the same".

"For the said reasons, till the time the draft SOP is notified, respondent No. 1 (Delhi govt) shall implement Delhi Preservation of Trees Standard Operating Procedures, 2023, annexed with the petition... There is nothing adversarial as far as the draft SOP is concerned. The draft SOP shall be implemented in its true, letter, spirit and intent and, in case there is any objection regarding any of the clauses in the implementation, the respondent No. 1 (Delhi govt) should approach this court," the order dated Feb 23 on Saturday stated.

When contacted, a senior forest department official said, "The draft SOP was designed so that there was no confusion among forest staff while handling a complaint related to DPTA... It also talks of basic tools needed such as wireless talkies while handling such complaints, just like police does."

The draft SOP, now implemented, considers that "trees provide substantial health, social and economic benefits and, therefore, their protection and preservation is essential to ensure preven-

HC seeks Centre stand on plea to deploy forces in city forests

Press Trust of India
eters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Delhi high court has sought the Centre's stand on a petition about whether any force can be deployed for the protection of forests in the national capital from illegal activities or encroachments by land grabbers and mafia.

The court's direction came on a petition seeking a direction to the Central government to post an adequate number of Indian Forest Service (IFS) officers with the Delhi government's department of forests and wildlife.

The petitioner had sought the court's direction for deployment of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) personnel on an urgent basis to aid and to protect the lives of the frontline forestry staff and to safeguard the reserved and protected forests of the national capital.

The court, in the order, also rejected the Delhi government's plea seeking waiver of costs of ₹50,000 imposed by it earlier for failing to file a reply in the matter.

Considering that the reply was not being filed in spite of repeated directions, the court said it was not inclined to waive the costs and directed the city government to deposit the same with the 'Green Delhi Account' within two weeks.

The court added that the amount shall be utilised for planting trees of Palkhan, Amaltas, Peepal, Goolar, Kadam and Neem species, having a nursery age of 4 years.

The counsel for the Centre, however, said CISE rules don't permit such deployment. "Counsel for Union of India is directed to take instructions as to whether any other force can be deployed for the protection of forest so as to ensure that no illegal activities or encroachments in the forest area is done by the land grabbers and mafia etc," said justice Subramanian Prasad in a recent order.

The petitioner had sought the court's direction for deployment of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) personnel on an urgent basis to aid and to protect the lives of the frontline forestry staff and to safeguard the reserved and protected forests of the national capital.

Trees in Corbett fell prey to greedy nexus, says SC

'Amazed at the audacity' of ex-Minister, officials involved in felling of 6,000 trees in reserve, says Bench; court wants panel to study if tiger safaris should be allowed in buffer zones of reserves

Krishnakant Baisajpal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday condemned the illegal felling of over 6,000 trees to construct buildings, ostensibly for "eco-tourism" at the Jim Corbett National Park in Uttarakhand, as a "classic case" of nexus between politicians and officials working to ransack the environment for short-term commercial ends.

The present case depicts a sorry state of affairs of human greed devastating one of the most celebrated abodes of tigers, i.e. the Corbett tiger reserve, a three-judge Bench headed by Justice B.R. Gavai observed.

The court also directed the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate

the agency to submit a report in three months.

The Bench said Uttarakhand could not "run away" from its responsibility to restore the forest to the last tree.

Justice Gopal said the tigers needed the forest as much as the forest depended on the tigers. "The presence of tigers in the forests is an indicator of the well-being of the ecosystem. Unless steps are taken for the protection of tigers, the ecosystem which receives around tigers cannot be protected... Events like illegal construction and illicit felling of trees like the one in Corbett cannot be ignored," he said.

Change to form a special-ised committee to study and recommend whether tiger safaris should be permitted in the buffer areas of a tiger reserve.

On the "huge devastation" caused by the illegal felling, the court said it was "amazed at the audacity" of former Uttarakhand Forest Minister and Congress leader Harak Singh Rawat and former Divisional Forest Officer Kishan Chand for giving forest and wildlife conservation laws a complete go-by and throwing the public trust doctrine "into the dustbin".

The judgment approved the Central Bureau of Investigation probe initiated into the case and directed

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TROUBLE WITH RESORTS
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Not our land, DDA tells NGT on Army 'felling' trees in Ridge area

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on Friday submitted to National Green Tribunal (NGT) that the land on which trees were allegedly felled by the Army didn't belong to it. The 8.78-hectare area on Central Ridge belongs to the Army, it stated.

In Dec 2023, the forest department served a notice to the Quarter Master General, Army Headquarters, on the basis of Google Earth images and field visits for allegedly clearing the area.

DDA informed NGT on Friday, "After due inquiry, it is submitted that the area in question has been found to be adjoining to the DDA Central Ridge, and is not under the jurisdiction of DDA. As per the information available with the respondent, DDA, the area in question is under the jurisdiction of Army Headquarters." Despite repeated attempts, no comment was available from the forest department, and the DDA vice-chairman.

DDA also stated that it was responsible only for creating, protecting and maintaining green covers in the areas under its jurisdiction.

The forest department earlier told NGT that the periodical analysis of Google Earth images had revealed that approximately 8.78 hectare had been cleared. NGT then asked the Quarter Master General to furnish a report on why a complaint should not be filed in the appropriate manner against him or her for the offence.

The department had said that on May 24, 1994, Central Ridge was declared a reserve forest under Section 4 of Indian Forest Act 1927. The Army then stated it was "ascertaining the details of the violation highlighted in the area at Central Ridge... Necessary action as per the existing policy will be taken by the Army".

Important Articles Of The Month

GREEN WARNING Environmental experts warn against Navy's radar station

Axing trees to up infections in TS

RACHEL DAMMALA | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 20

Environmental experts have warned against the Telangana state government's plans to clear 12 lakh trees in the Damagundam forest of Ananthagiri Hills in Vikarabad district for the Indian Navy's Very Low-Frequency Radar Communication System. This large-scale deforestation not only jeopardises the local ecosystem but also the livelihoods of 60,000 residents across 20 villages reliant on the forest for sustenance, they warned.

Renowned pulmonologist, allergist, immunologist, and medical journalist Dr Vyakarnam

Nageshwar, talking about the pivotal role of trees in pollen production and dispersion, explained that trees play a crucial role in pollen production and distribution, and the mass felling of trees can drastically alter the local ecosystem, leading to an increase in pollen concentration.

Dr Nageshwar, who also wrote to the National Green Tribunal on the issue on Tuesday, warned of potential catastrophic consequences if extensive deforestation was not checked.

He said that this phenomenon, coupled with escalating temperatures, sets the stage for a possible 'pollen tsunami,' similar to the extreme heat



Dr Vyakarnam Nageshwar

experienced in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, reaching a staggering heat index of 62.3 degrees Celsius.

"Pollen particles, lacking natural tree barriers, can travel vast distances through the wind, heightening the risk of allergic reactions and respiratory ailments among

Hyderabad's populace, situated merely 70 kilometres away," his statement read.

The anticipated surge in pollen production resulting from the destruction of the forest ecosystem would worsen climate change, contributing to global warming, he warned.

Warmer temperatures and elevated carbon dioxide levels prolong pollination periods, intensifying pollen allergies for both allergic and previously unaffected individuals, he added.

Urban areas may experience a 200 per cent rise in pollen accumulation due to heightened carbon dioxide levels, precipitating increased asthma

attacks, respiratory issues, and emergency hospital admissions, the note read.

He implored authorities to acknowledge the dire implications of deforestation on public health and take prompt measures to mitigate these consequences.

"While the proposed Naval Radar station is crucial for national security, it must not come at the expense of environmental devastation and human well-being; preserving our forests must be a paramount concern for any responsible government, with concerted efforts required to conserve and protect our natural ecosystems," Dr Vyakarnam Nageshwar.

Ridge: HC Contempt Axe On Top Officials

1,100 Trees Felled For Construction Of A Road

Abhinav.Garg@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Delhi High Court on Monday issued contempt notices to DDA vice-chairman and forest department's principal secretary for felling of around 1,100 trees to construct a road in the Southern Ridge.

The high court termed as "shocking" that Delhi Development Authority sought permission from the Supreme Court on March 4, while the trees apparently had already been cut a week before, on Feb 29.

Interestingly, the apex court had, in its March 4 order, dismissed DDA's application seeking permission to fell or translocate the trees. It had asked the land-owning agency to re-examine the proposal to construct a road via the Southern Ridge forest and consult experts, reminding it that being a govt agency DDA has a duty to "first make an attempt to protect the environment by praying for felling of only those trees which are absolutely mandatory.... and apply their mind whether alternatives can be examined to save trees."

On Monday, Justice Jasmeet Singh took stock of the situation and noted that the

Last year, HC had said no permission for felling trees would be granted in Delhi. The court, which saw photographs of the site, remarked that the felling of trees was 'even more shocking' in light of the top court's order

conduct of authorities was in "total violation" of court orders against the felling of trees. It asked the top brass of DDA and forest department to file an affidavit stating why action for contempt should not be taken against them.

The court pointed out that 400 trees were cut on DDA land and 700 on forest land, observing it "clearly shows total apathy towards orders passed by the court and total violation of the same." The court also directed the authorities to ensure that no further trees were felled in the Southern Ridge. It was dealing with a case concerning permissions granted by tree officers for felling trees without

passing speaking orders.

Last year, the high court had said no permission for felling trees would be granted in Delhi. The court, which saw photographs of the site, remarked that the felling of trees was "even more shocking" in light of the top court's order.

"If you are not going to follow the law, not going to follow court orders, you will need to go to jail," the judge remarked. However, the counsel for DDA denied trees were cut by the agency and pointed out its application seeking permission from the Supreme Court was pending adjudication at that time. While hearing another matter related to the pruning of trees in a colony in Janakpuri, the court also asked the forest department to state how and why permission was being granted for the pruning of branches with 45cm girth.

Earlier this month, the court had expressed its displeasure over the cutting down of the trees in the Southern Ridge for the approach road and said if the authorities wanted to convert the capital into the Thar desert, they should say so in an affidavit.

Missing Green Nod Delays 4 Key Road Projects In City

PWD Writes To Forest Dept For Speedy Disposal Of Matter

Siddhanta Mishra @timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Four major road infrastructure projects are facing delays because of lack of clearance from the city's forest department. Public Works Department officials have claimed.

The four projects are Bopalguda Phase-III, Pungabli Bagh-Kaja Gardens elevated corridor and flyover each at Nand Nagar and Anand Vihar. Together these projects will cost approximately Rs 1,800 crore to the public exchequer. PWD is intent to expedite the permissions to avoid an "increasing burden on the exchequer".

Responding to queries from TOI, a forest official said Delhi High Court had stayed felling of trees since August last year.

"The projects in question got approval from I/T/DP/RC after obtaining consent from all stakeholders. During the planning phase of the project, representatives of forest department had not notified or recorded that the above-mentioned land fall in deemed forest area," wrote Shantanka Aia, special secretary, PWD, in her letter to forest department.

According to officials, Anand Vihar flyover came to a standstill after forest department received complaints of a few trees being illegally felled at the project site.

Talks between PWD and forest officials were ongoing for past 10 months, but without any headway, an official said. The project involves construction of a flyover between Anand Vihar railway overbridge and Aparna Road. With the work yet to be completed, the area is marred by heavy congestion.

"It was not possible for PWD to know that the land was a deemed forest because road already existed on that location. Accordingly, work

NO HOPE FOR NOW?

SARAJULLAH PHASE III
Started in 2015
No. of trees to be transplanted after completion
274
Status: Was supposed to be completed in 2017
Estimated cost of the project: **1,000 CR**

ANAND VIHAR FLYOVER
Started in 2022
No. of trees to be transplanted
39
Status: Was supposed to open in Jan-Feb 2024

ANAND VIHAR FLYOVER
Started in 2022
No. of trees to be transplanted
75
Status: Was expected to be completed in Dec. 2023

NAND NAGRI FLYOVER
Started in 2023
No. of trees to be transplanted
118
Status: Expected to be completed in Oct 2024



was started on the stretch. The paved road, along with the right of way of 60m, is part of the road and is not a part of the deemed forest. In view of the above, it is requested that the agency be allowed to remove work at Anand Vihar transit time and cost overruns, the letter further stated.

Bopalguda Phase-III, a project that has long been facing issues related to land acquisition and other hindrances, has also come to a standstill, with the permission to cut or transplant 253 trees awaited. The project envisages seamless connectivity between Mayapuri Vihar-I and Sarai Kade Khan, where the corridor will merge with existing Bopalguda Phase-I and provide signal free connectivity between east Delhi and AIDMS Phase-II of the project, entailing the construction of a 1.5km long stretch, started in April 2022 and was to be completed in Oct 2023. But it has yet to see the light of the day.

At Pungabli Bagh, the project was supposed to be completed last January. The stream remains silted, and the area continues to see heavy congestion. Similarly to Nand Nagar, PWD had started construction work as per the original plan of building a 1.5km long flyover comprising six lanes to make the route signal free. But clearance from forest department is awaited here too.

Important Articles Of The Month

Over 72k trees were on chopping block

► Continued from page 1

While the user agency was yet to get a clearance from the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL), GTTPL sought permission from Karnataka to lay the transmission line through state forests.

Based on the Central Electricity Authority's proposal to execute an additional 400 kV feed to Goa, GTTPL had reportedly planned the transmission line from Narendra village, near Dharwad in Karnataka, by tapping the existing 400 kV Narendra line of the Power Grid Corporation of India, linking the 400/200 kV substation at Xeldom in Goa.

The transmission line was aligned to pass through three Karnataka districts — Dharwad, Belagavi and Uttara Kannada — before reaching south Goa.



Photo for representation
PROTECTING WESTERN GHATS

The user agency had also submitted to take up afforestation in nine villages of Belagavi, Dharwad and Uttara Kannada on 360 hectares of degraded forest land.

After the initial objection to the proposed alignment, GTTPL authorities had submitted realignment of the transmission line to avoid taking it through dense forests. Moreover, the alignment cleared by the forest department required clearing out of more than 72,000 trees in four forest divisions, including the Dandeli wildlife division.

Surprisingly, the deputy

conservator of forests from Dharwad, Haliyal and Dandeli had recommended the diversion proposal, while their counterpart from Belagavi rejected it.

While the conservator of forests (Canara Circle) and chief conservator of forests (Dharwad) had recommended it, CCF Belagavi had rejected the proposal citing ecological destruction.

Based on the ground officer's opinion, PCCF (HoFF) submitted the proposal to ACS, forest department, for consideration under the Forest Act 1980 for diversion of 174.65 hectares of forest. However, ACS forest department, in consultation with Karnataka forest minister Eshwar Khandre, rejected the proposal and directed the user agency to lay the transmission line through non-forested landscape.

In a stern letter to the for-

est department dated March 16, 2024, a copy of which was accessed by STOI, the ACS directed: "Henceforth, the department shall take very strict action on projects like these in the larger interests of forest, environment and wildlife conservation for the future generation."

Commenting on the issue, wildlife conservationist Giridhar Kulkarni said: "It is indeed a positive development and goes in the larger interest of wildlife conservation in the districts of Belagavi and Uttara Kannada. I had submitted multiple representations to the authorities to reject the previous as well as the revised proposal." He further said: "We thank forest minister Eshwar Khandre for taking such a bold decision to save the precious Western Ghats from rapacious development."

Forest department notice to DDA over tree-felling inside Sanjay Van

HT Correspondent

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New Delhi: Delhi's Forest and Wildlife department has issued a notice to the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) regarding the illegal felling of trees in Sanjay Van, based on allegations by a group of activists.

The department said though it had given permission to prune trees at Sanjay Van last year, based on the complaint, it was seeking a response from the DDA on the status of pruning and whether any trees were felled in the forest.

"Whereas, it has been alleged that a tree offence has been committed by illegal cutting of trees located at Sanjay Van, Mehrauli, without permission, which is a violation of the Delhi Preservation of Trees Act, 1994.

The statement or presence of the person (s) addressed in this notice is required to find out the factual position and to determine the extent of the offence according to its merit," said the order, addressed to the deputy director, horticulture of DDA's divisions 4 and 6, a copy of which HT has seen.

The order directed DDA officials to appear before the deputy conservator of forests (south) and tree officer at their office in south Delhi's Tughlakabad on April 17, 2024 at 10:40am, adding failure to appear will result in legal action being initiated against the officials concerned.

A senior forest department official said, based on allegations and submission of photographs showing trees that were possibly head hacked, action

has been initiated. "We have sought a response on the same. An officer will present their case before us," said the official, adding that permission to prune trees was given early last year, but no permission was given to fell trees.

On HT's visit to Sanjay Van, it found pockets where trees were being pruned, with excessive pruning also observed in some parts. Saplings were seen planted around the trees that were pruned.

A senior DDA official, when contacted, denied that even a single tree was felled in the area. "DDA has taken up eco-restoration of Sanjay Van since last year. Native tree species of the Ridge are being planted and to do that, weeds are being cleared and the invasive vilayati kikar is being pruned, to make

openings in the top canopy. Over 20,000 saplings have been planted underneath such trees," said an official. He added that over 10,000 more native saplings will be planted this monsoon season.

The allegations were made by a volunteer group -- There is No Earth B, which organises regular clean-up drives at Sanjay Van. The group, which has over 1,500 volunteers that take part in drives from time-to-time, said it carried out a thorough investigation at Sanjay Van on March 17, which led to them discovering multiple trees that were felled, it said.

"Such activities pose a severe threat to the ecological balance of Sanjay Van," said Stuti Chaturvedi, 20, a student of Miranda House and one of the volunteers.

Important Articles Of The Month

Forest dept notice to DDA over tree felling at Sanjay Van

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The Delhi forest department has issued a notice to Delhi Development Authority (DDA) over the alleged felling of trees at Sanjay Van.

The forest department's south division has confirmed the matter, saying that "a tree offence has been committed by illegal cutting of

trees located at Sanjay Van, Mehrauli, New Delhi, without permission, which is violation of Delhi Preservation Trees Act (DPTA), 1994."

The alleged incident was reported by green activists, officials said.

The department asked the official concerned — the deputy conservator of forests (south)/tree officer — of DDA to appear before the divisional forest department's office on April 17 at 10 am. "In event of failure to appear, legal action will be initiated" against the official and the matter would proceed ex-parte, the notice issued on March 21 said.

Forest department officials said that the problem seemed to be of heavy pruning. "It seems that against a permission for light pruning, they did a heavy pruning of

many trees. Still, we have issued the notice to know the factual position and get an explanation," an official said.

A statement from DDA on the matter said: "No tree felling has been done at Sanjay Van. DDA has undertaken eco-restoration... as per the SOP developed by the forest department. Accordingly, weeds like lantana has been removed and pruning of Proso-

pis juliflora, which is an exotic invasive species has been undertaken."

Activists of There is No Earth B, which raised the matter, said that during a clean-up they found that hundreds of trees had been "chopped off". "On March 17, we found 800-1,000 trees to have been chopped off. This had created a large clearing," Shubham, the clean-up organiser, said.

Experts object to elevation work on Yamuna floodplain in NE Delhi

Kushagra Dixit@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Ecologists have objected to the elevation work being done on the Yamuna floodplain at Bela Farm Estate near Shastrri Park in northeast Delhi.

A TOI team that visited the locality found that the truckloads of debris and soil had already been dumped, which had elevated the area within a boundary marked as Bela Farm Estate that came under Delhi Development Authority (DDA). The move has filled the low-lying area by several metres, bringing it at the level of the main road.

A board of Delhi forest department's south forest division marking the 2022-23 plantation drive over 19.5 hectares was found in the area while a deserted horse stable at the end of the floodplain had a signage reading Delhi Mounted Police. According to officials, DDA had given 19.5 hectares to forest department for compensatory afforestation.

Experts, however, pointed out that the work violated the 2015 National Green Tribunal (NGT) judgment in the case of *Manoj Mishra versus Union of India, Delhi govt and others*, which had set the guidelines to be followed to protect the Yamuna and its floodplain. "No filling of the flood-



Landscaping being done at the floodplain area near Shastrri Park.

plain/riverbeds be allowed in the name of development and removal of ghats," it had stated. NGT has now formed a high-level committee under the Delhi chief secretary to demarcate and conserve the Yamuna floodplain.

Officials at forest department, however, claimed that the low-lying area was being elevated to save the future plantation from flood. According to the department, the plantation on 19 hectares of the floodplain was lost during the 2023 Yamuna flood.

"We know that there can't be any permanent structure on the floodplain and we are merely raising the area to protect the plantation, so that the tree cover on the floodplain

increases. The survival chance of the plantation will be more if planted at elevated levels," said a forest official, requesting anonymity.

No comment was available from DDA and Delhi Police. Experts, however, called the step an offence. According to Prof AK Gosain, professor emeritus of IIT Delhi who was part of the NGT-appointed committee whose submissions led to the 2015 judgment, "It is not allowed, this whole floodplain area is called O zone, apparently it's a depression. Any kind of levelling, filling goes against the order of NGT."

Such a move can restrict the river to a small segment and its level will attain a very

high level at the time of high discharge, causing a breach in the embankment, he pointed out. Another order by NGT has "asserted that no plantation should be done on the floodplain, yet somehow, govt is using this land for compensatory afforestation, which is illegal," Gosain said.

Another ecologist requesting anonymity stated that if plant species didn't survive the flood, it meant that they didn't belong there. "There are desired plant species belonging to the Yamuna river basin, both grasses and trees. Those native species won't be affected in any flood. It's criminal to fill up the active floodplain to grow plant species that won't survive floods."

Divan Singh, a Delhi-based environment activist, said it was sad that the authority was altering the floodplain's natural soil composition. "The floodplain is composed of young alluvium that is highly porous and allows quick recharge of groundwater. But the sand being dumped is older alluvium that is much finer, less porous and with poorer recharge capacity. It's damaging the ecology and impairing the natural functions of the floodplain," he said, demanding that the sand must be removed before the monsoon.

Reduce no. of trees to be impacted by bus depot, NBCC told

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: State Expert Appraisal Committee (SEAC) has asked National Buildings Construction Corporation (NBCC), which sought environmental clearance for development of a bus depot at Vasant Vihar to reduce the number of trees to be impacted by the project. The site currently has 110 trees and the project proponent proposes to transplant 46 trees.

According to the proposal submitted to SEAC, the expected population at the bus depot will be 480 people. It will have one basement, ground floor and four floors, and a terrace. The maximum height of the building will be 29.3 metres.

The project proponent has informed SEAC that the project is a complete EV bus depot and provision for electric charging facility for all parking slots will be made available.

A SEAC official said that the project was yet to get clearance and they had asked project proponent to revise the number of impacted trees.

"The girth of the trees numbered 8 to 14 ranges from 2.95 metres to 8 metres. This is an extraordinarily high concentration of high-girth trees in one row and are part of the natural heritage of the area. This row of trees needs to be conserved by giving sufficient unpaved ground space around the trees as breathing space," said the minutes of a meeting held on Feb 26.

"In particular, the banyan tree of 8-metre girth needs a sufficient unpaved tree base of 1-2 metres width," it added. The minutes were recently shared. "It is suggested that the proposal to transplant trees within the row of tree number 8 to 14, may be reviewed, and preferably avoided."

According to the minutes of the meeting, tree number 16, a pipal with a girth of 4.5 metres is currently earmarked for removal and transplantation. "It is suggested that since this is a high-girth tree, options for retaining it at the present location may be explored, if feasible. The landscape plan may be revised accordingly and re-submit."

Telangana braces for pollen tsunami

12 lakh trees being cut in Vikarabad for Navy's radar system

M.SAI GOPAL HYDERABAD

Telangana is set to face a significant public health crisis triggered by a pollen tsunami due to massive tree felling being taken up at the Damagundam forest in Vikarabad to make way for the Indian Navy's Very Low Frequency (VLF) Radar Communication System.

As authorities go ahead with the decision to cut nearly 12 lakh trees, the operations could trigger a massive pollen tsunami due to the absence of tree barriers, exacerbating health risks. As a result, the urban areas in Telangana are expected to experience a 200 per cent increase in pollen accumulation, leading to an exponential rise in allergies.

By estimates, the number of people who will knowingly or unknowingly suffer from allergies will be an additional one crore in Telangana State.

Noted pulmonologist from Hyderabad Dr Vyataram Nageswar, who recently submitted a detailed

Potential health crisis

TS LIKELY TO WITNESS A MASSIVE POLLEN TSUNAMI DUE TO DEFORESTATION

- Surge in asthma, respiratory issues, emergency hospital admissions likely
- 1 crore additional individuals to suffer from allergies in TS
- Major public health hazard in the coming months due to felling of 12 lakh trees
- Respiratory ailments likely to shoot up in Hyderabad

200% increase in pollen accumulation due to increased CO2 levels

report on the impact of felling 12 lakh trees on public health to the National Green Tribunal (NGT) warned that massive deforestation will not only be a disaster for climate in Telangana but also trigger a pollen tsunami, which will be very difficult to deal with.

"If such massive deforestation is not avoided, it could lead to disastrous consequences as the phenomenon, coupled with rising temperatures, sets the stage for a potential pollen

tsunami that can be compounded by escalating temperatures such as the one we have seen in Brazil," he warned.

The unprecedented temperature surge, compounded by deforestation in the Damagundam forest, poses a severe threat to public health, potentially precipitating a surge in hospitalisations and emergency admissions, he said.

Pollen particles may traverse vast distances through the wind and given the ab-

sence of natural tree barriers, heightening the risk of allergic reactions and respiratory ailments among the nearby populace in Hyderabad city, situated a mere 70 km away.

The prolonged pollution periods resulting from warmer climates and increased carbon dioxide levels will further exacerbate pollen allergies, affecting not only allergic individuals but also those previously unaffected.

(SEE PAGE 17)

Important Articles Of The Month

Siolkars euphoric and full of praise for the High Court

Team Herald

SIOLIM: From a reflective mood, villagers from Siolim were euphoric and full of praise for the Goa Bench of the Bombay High Court after the petitioners were allowed to implead Calangute MLA Michael Lobo and the Village Panchayat as respondents 8 and 7 of the petition.

"One cannot get away with everything all the time. There is a time when everything has to come to an end and this is God's intervention at the right time through the High Court," reacted petitioner Maria Fernandes.

"People don't know their rights. They get frightened of what they should do and not do. Despite being educated, we behave as though we are not. The direction of the High Court today proves the power of the people," said an ecstatic Fernandes.

First Petitioner Aaron

GOA GREEN BRIGADE DEMANDS EXEMPLARY PUNISHMENT

Welcomes HC decision to implead Calangute MLA in tree felling case

PANJIM: The Goa Green Brigade has welcomed the decision of the Bombay High Court at Goa, to allow to implead the Sarpanch and Panchayat Secretary of Siolim- Marna Village Panchayat and Calangute MLA Michael Lobo in the Siolim tree cutting case.

Those found guilty must be given exemplary punishment so that it acts as a deterrence in the future and to ensure that law makers

don't become law breakers, urged Goa Green Brigade convenor Avertino Miranda. He said, "While the Goa Green Brigade is not against development, but it has to be sustainable and without destruction of our natural heritage. Build roads around the trees as the expanded roads invariably are occupied to park vehicles or for commercial carts. Expansion of roads is not the solution."

ple - don't mess around. You are elected to serve and not make money at the cost of environment and the voters," warned Aaron.

To rub salt on injury, the High Court order further reads: "The learned Advocate General has made it clear that the Public Works Department (PWD) was neither widening the road nor had anything to do with the felling of trees from the private proper-

ty. She helped her colleagues prepare the church for Maundy Thursday.

As Siolkars prepare for the penultimate days of the holy week, Mathilda Dias best describes the spirit when she said, "Our pain on seeing the trees being cut indiscriminately is easing out with the

High Court arising hope for justice. I never expected this to happen."

"I am completely confused. I cannot say anything right now," stated Siolim Sarpanch, Abhay Shirodkar.

Calangute MLA Michael Lobo did not respond to phone calls.

K'taka says no to Goa power line through Western Ghats forest

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IN A NUTSHELL

- > **Project:** Goa-Tamnar Transmission Project
- > **Capacity:** Meeting Goa's power demand for 15-20 years
- > **Benefit to Karnataka:** Exchange of 1,200MW solar power between K'taka-Goa grids
- > **Length of the line:** 77km
- > **Length of line in forest:** 31km
- > **Length in tiger reserve:** 6km
- > **Width of corridor:** 46 metres
- > **Forest type:** Wet evergreen, semi-evergreen, moist deciduous
- > **Trees to be affected:** 72,552

Bengaluru: Karnataka govt has rejected neighbouring Goa's proposal to draw a power transmission line through the Western Ghats forest by the Goa-Tamnar Transmission Project Limited (GTTPL), and directed the project executing agency to lay the line through non-forested areas instead.

The state govt has also ordered serving of showcause notice to forest department officials who had earlier recommended the project, overlooking destruction of large tracts of forested areas in the Ghats. Planning to light up parts of South Goa by sourcing power from Tamnar in Chhattisgarh, GTTPL

had sought permission from Karnataka to divert a whopping 174.6 hectares of forest land, including the Kali Tiger Reserve (KTR), to lay a 400 kV transmission line.

> **On chopping block, P 2**

Felling of trees for projects should be last resort, says HC

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Delhi High Court Wednesday directed the forest department to be mandatorily involved in planning of any infrastructure project that entails felling of trees.

Asking that a standard operating procedure (SOP) be finalised on the department's role, HC said efforts must be made to save trees and felling them should only be the "last resort". An attempt has to be made to co-exist with nature, it added. Justice Jasmeet Singh said the SOP should also deal with the requirement of grant of permission before the launch of any private construction involving cutting of trees.

HC's direction came on a petition relating to permissions granted by tree officers for felling of trees without

passing speaking orders. The court had said last year that no permission for felling of trees would be granted in the national capital.

"Since the issue involves felling of trees for infrastructure projects and construction of individual houses, it is felt that an SOP be planned by the respondent (Delhi govt authorities) in consultation with lawyers," said HC.

During the hearing, the court told the Delhi govt counsel the SOP should mandate a visit by the official concerned to the site of an individual construction for examining if the trees can be saved before sanction for felling them is granted. The court said for infrastructure projects, the forest department will be involved in the planning to suggest if the trees can be saved.

"With consent of the par-

ties, it is directed that Aditya Prasad (petitioner's counsel), along with amicus curiae and the responsible officer, including the counsel for the respondent, will draft an SOP with regard to (a) prior permission for construction in Delhi which will involve cutting of trees, and (b) for every infrastructure project, the forest department will be involved in the planning stage so that every possible effort is made for saving the tree and only if it is inevitable, permission for felling of tree as a last resort would be given," the court directed.

It also asked Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to file an affidavit giving its stand on the alleged cutting of trees on the Southern Ridge for widening a road near the South Asian University. The DDA counsel said no trees were felled for the project.

'2 crore saplings planted in 4 yrs'

New Delhi: Environment minister Gopal Rai on Tuesday said govt planted two crore saplings in the past four years. He said Delhi will plant 63 lakh saplings in the next financial year. Rai, who held a meeting with 21 agencies on tree plantation, said chief minister has fulfilled all the promises he made during the last elections. One of the 10 promises that the CM made was about plantation of two crore saplings and trees in Delhi in the next five years. "We are happy to announce that we have been able to achieve that target within four years," he said. TNN

Important Articles Of The Month

‘Virasat vaticas’: Saving heritage

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Uttar Pradesh State Biodiversity Board (UPSBB) will plant ‘virasat vriksha’ (heritage trees) to create ‘virasat vaticas’ to conserve 948 species already notified by the state govt. Heritage trees will be propagated through seeds, tissues, grafting and other techniques to grow a new tree, which will have maximum possible similar traits, if not all, as the old tree in these gardens. Heritage gardens will be created in 11 districts in an area of 8-10 acres each, depending on the availability of land.

Secretary, UPSBB, B Prabhakar said that each of these 948 trees have been given a unique identity code to make identification and conservation easier in Virasat Vaticas. Divisional forest officers have been instructed to put up boards on heritage trees with identity codes.

In official records, the first is a banyan tree from Agra with code 0001AGR001 and the last is also a banyan tree from Varanasi with

code 0948VAR099. Lucknow’s mother Dussehri tree also finds mention as 0531LKO021.

The board has already released a book on heritage trees, with a personalised note on each tree, which is meant to create a public connection with these trees. There is a 100-year-old Kareel tree in govt



Kareel tree. Also called leafless caper berry in English and Tenti and Karira in Hindi

records. Tamal, Arru, Chitwan, Sheesham, Gamhar, Chilbil, Mysore Banyan, Mahogany, Haldu, Jamun, Arjun, Shami and Kareel are the species that do not survive up to 100 years. It is a rarity that ancient trees from these species exist in various parts of the state.

Mother tree of Dussehri mango in Lucknow’s Kakori tehsil, an imli tree in Fatehpur on which 52 revolutionaries were hanged during freedom struggle and mother tree of langda mango on a court premises in Varanasi are others mentioned in the board’s records. State govt had issued a GO to notify heritage trees in UP in Nov 2019. Heritage trees should exist only on govt or community land and not on forest and private land.



Mother tree of Dussehri mango in Kakori, Lucknow. Aged about 200 yrs

10 wetlands in Asola to conserve rainwater

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New Delhi: Officials at Asola Wildlife Sanctuary and south forest division, under the Delhi forest and wildlife department, have planned to conserve water this monsoon through refurbished wetlands.

According to the officials, the department, after a survey and mapping, expects to conserve at least 8 lakh crore litres of water by the end of this monsoon.

A report was prepared by the forest department on how they could achieve this aim. The officials have identified 10 major wetlands in south Delhi’s forest areas.

According to the officials, there were already natural depressions and traditional wetlands at Asola and the southern ridge, and they started by recognising such traditional ponds.

“There are already check dams in the sanctuary which were made on a court order in 2020. Our focus has slowly shifted to increasing the water holding capacity of the sanctuary, as having proper water holding ponds in a wildlife sanctuary helps in protection and conservation of flora and fauna. In the long run, it will help us in raising the water table,” a senior forest official said.

Many long-forgotten wetlands were also revived and their history was traced with the help of some villagers and retired forest officials.

“Giving the original or historic name to an improvised or refurbished pond also increases a sense of responsibility. We thus decided to name those ponds what they used to be called. In this series, we got names like Gummar Talab, Boru Talab, Nava Talab, Pulia Talab etc.”



The move is likely to conserve at least 8 lakh crore litres of water by monsoon-end

the official said.

According to the plan, the department aims at conserving 801.79 lakh litres of water through the wetlands and ponds. The areas these ponds span vary from 3,046 square metres to 4,915 square metres. Their depth is from 2.3-3.3 metres. The water holding capacity varies from 61.68 lakh litres to 98.72 lakh litres.

“Delhi has a variety of water bodies. However, over the years, most of the water bodies have either been encroached upon, or are heavily polluted or have silt, making them less functional. This is true for groundwater recharge,” says a report that traces the existing status of the water bodies in the southern forest division using drone survey, GIS, remote sensing and physical surveys.

The report points out that a total of over 142 water bodies in Delhi’s relatively small size have either been completely built-up (20%), turned into parks (9%), untraceable (4%), or filled with contaminated water (12%).

SURVIVAL RATE OF TRANSPLANTED TREES LOW: BMC DATA

Mumbai lost over 21,000 trees in 6 years to make way for Metro, road projects

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW AN EXPRESS RTI APPLICATION

PRATIP ACHARYA MUMBAI, MARCH 23

IF DETERIORATING air quality over the past few years has emerged as a major concern for Mumbai, its fast-depleting urban green cover has only compounded the problems. The city has witnessed felling of at least 21,028 trees over the past six years, according to data provided by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to The Indian Express under the RTI Act. The trees were felled largely



Mumbai tree count is 29.75 lakh as per 2011 census. file

FADING GREEN, 2018 TO 2023

Trees cut (24 wards)	: 21,028
Trees transplanted (24 wards)	: 21,916
Trees transplanted (9 wards)*	: 4,338
Transplantation success (9 wards)*	: 963
Transplantation success rate (%)*	: 22.2

*Transplantation success rate available only for 9 wards; Source: RTI response from BMC.

to make way for development projects such as Metro, bullet train, coastal road, sewage treatment plant (STP) and the Goregaon-Mulund Link Road among others. The BMC data also shows that although it transplanted 21916 trees during the six-year period — between 2018 and 2023 — their survival rate was low.

Data on survival of transplanted trees was available only for 9 out of the total 24 wards. According to the data, out of the 4,338 trees transplanted in these 9 wards, only 963 trees (22%) survived.

Another cause of concern for Mumbai is the city’s tree count. According to the BMC, Mumbai has a total of 29,75,283 trees. Civic officials, however, clarified that this number is from

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Important Articles Of The Month

PWD can't express helplessness over upkeep of trees: HC

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Delhi High Court on Wednesday said the public works department (PWD) cannot express helplessness as far as upkeep of the trees planted by it on the roadside is concerned.

Justice Jasmeet Singh, hearing a case concerning plantation of trees in the city from the funds in the "Green Delhi Account", also asked the department to furnish details about the PWD's claim that it has planted almost four lakh trees.

The court had last year directed the plantation of at least 10,000 trees in the city by authorities by utilising an amount of more than Rs 70 lakh deposited by defaulting litigants as costs in several matters.

COURT SAYS

Before the hearing, PWD shall show the 3.9 lakh trees planted by it as shown (in the news reports)

During the hearing, the court was informed by the court-appointed amicus curiae that although PWD earlier claimed that it had no land to carry out afforestation

drives, news reports stated that the department has planted 3.9 lakh trees.

The amicus further informed the court that the 400 trees planted by PWD along the Ring Road have perished due to no maintenance, adding that there is a "complete lack of institutional will". As the high court sought an explanation from PWD, Delhi govt's lawyer said there are several difficulties in maintaining trees on the roadside, including the damage caused by vehicles.

"You are a municipal authority. You cannot express helplessness," the court responded, seeking details of the steps taken. The govt lawyer said new trees would be planted at the site and the court asked him to place on record the details of the 3.9 lakh trees planted by the department.

"Before the hearing, PWD shall show the 3.9 lakh trees planted by it as shown (in the news reports)," the court said while listing the matter for hearing on March 19.

Power threat to the bustard

The Centre has told the SC that it is not possible to put power lines underground in the habitat of the Great Indian Bustard. What is the nature of the threat to the bird, and how valid is the Centre's argument?

JAY MAZUMDAR
NEW DELHI, MARCH 28

THE SUPREME COURT next week will review its April 2021 order to bury underground all power lines in the habitat of the Great Indian Bustard (GIB) after the Centre found the order "practically impossible to implement" over long distances.

The court's order suggests steps to protect and conserve the 100-year-old bird in its natural habitat. The order also suggests that power lines should be buried in key habitats of the GIB.

With fewer than 150 individuals of this large, outcast-like bird species left in the world, the critically endangered GIB is caught in a deadly trap of power lines that cross its last refuge in the Kutch and Thar deserts of western India.

As these open landscapes also carry the promise of abundant solar and wind energy, the high-tension networks escalating power are only getting denser with new projects proposed every year.

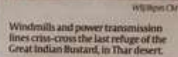
Following the deaths of a number of birds due to collisions with power lines over the years, the Supreme Court three years ago ordered that the overhead transmission network should be sent underground in key habitats of the GIB.

Why power lines kill bustards
Power lines pose a risk to all flying birds. In 2020, a study carried out by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) in 4,200 sq km of GIB habitat in and around Desert National Park (DNP) in Rajasthan estimated that power lines killed around 84,000 birds of multiple species every year.

GIBs are especially vulnerable because of their narrow frontal vision and large size. Unlike some birds that have a panoramic vision around the head, species like raptors and bustards have extensive blind areas above their heads. When they stretch their head forward to scan the ground below, they fly blind in the direction of travel.

In an affidavit submitted in court in March 2021, the Ministry of Power had said that GIBs cannot detect power lines ahead of them from far. As they are heavy birds, they are unable to manoeuvre across power lines within close distances.

The 2010 WII study estimated that a "conservative estimate of a power line incident mortalities per year was sufficient" to cause the extinction of the species within 20 years. Acknowledging the urgency, the SC in April 2021 ordered the lines to be buried "in respect of the unit factor".



The bustard area shows GIB's habitat in the wild.

Windmills and power transmission lines cross the last refuge of the Great Indian Bustard, in Thar desert.

Arguments of the Centre

In an affidavit submitted to the SC this February, the Centre said taking lines of 66 KV and higher voltage underground was not feasible for the evacuation of bulk power due to constraints such as transmission losses, maintenance challenges, multiple cable joints, increased time requirements, and cost of safety.

"The cost implications of undergrounding of all power lines in the large area identified are very heavy... running into many thousands of crores," the Centre said. "The cost of excavation that will bury the nation", it said, runs "high" and "disproportionate".

The affidavit also said that harnessing renewable power from high-potential areas of Rajasthan and Gujarat was "essential for meeting rising power demand" and, India's inter-national commitments on climate change.

On the ground, a reality check

On March 5, 2020, Power Minister R K Singh told Lok Sabha that underground cable systems of 220-400 KV voltage were "an integral part of the Modern Day Power Transmission Infrastructure".

However, the Minister explained, due to higher machine requirements and higher cost compared to overhead sys-

tems, underground cables were being used on a case-by-case basis for short distances. His answer attracted a list of 54 underground power lines — the longest being a 1,200 KV line over 32 km.

In 2021, the SC listed two types of power lines — those that would install dead-enders, and those that would be converted to underground lines, if feasible, within a year. In Rajasthan, 25 transmission lines with a total length of 1,342 km were to install dead-enders. Only four of these lines, of 104 km cumulative length, were to be laid underground. All four are 33 KV lines, the longest of which stretches 45 km.

A summary cost estimate put the total expenses of installing dead-enders across 1,342 km and undergrounding 104 km in Rajasthan — have been laid underground in the three years since the SC's 2021 order.

Over this period, a court-appointed committee approved applications for new power lines of around 2,350 km through the GIB

landscape in the Thar, and notified lists of the length for overhead laying.

Other threats faced by GIB
Power lines are not the only threat to GIB. Free-roaming dogs, feral porcupines, and poaching are also threats. The bird is also facing a greater risk to the loss of its habitat, particularly nesting sites, and an erosion of support from local communities are other concerns.

In an affidavit, the Centre said the government was working to save the bustard through initiatives such as captive breeding and habitat restoration and protection. Despite breeding troubles, efforts at captive breeding succeeded at Sami in Rajasthan in 2021, when two GIB females laid eggs in captivity and a chick was hatched through an artificial incubation in March 2023.

However, the purpose of captive breeding is to supplement the wild population which is possible only where a suitable habitat is free of hostile infrastructure. "Burying cables is the priority, since bird diversions are not foolproof. Where undergrounding is not feasible, we should lay the best diversions and spend well on their maintenance. The government has approved CAMPA funds (interest-free) for compensatory afforestation and employment of wildlife habitat," a former member of the Rajasthan State Wildlife Board said.

Not green energy vs wildlife
A three-member panel headed by DNP cautioned against setting sustainable development goals against the survival needs of a species. "GIB is the flagship species of the grassland, and the state bird of Rajasthan. We cannot greenwash its potential loss in the name of renewable power," he said.

A WII researcher who has worked on the impact of power lines on the desert species stressed the danger of "an infrastructure overdrive" in the desert. "We need to determine how much land we can devote to installations for harnessing the sun and wind without disturbing the desert ecology," he said.

In an order passed on March 21, the SC was inclined to modify the scope of burying power lines from 88,336 sq km of potential GIB area to 13,696 sq km of priority GIB area in Rajasthan and Gujarat. On his part, M K Ranjitsinh, the petitioner in the case, has asked that at least 20,890 sq km of GIB habitat be freed of overhead lines.

The expert committee appointed by the court has until July 31 to make its recommendations.

A first for Damdama: Sambar deer caught on cam; its count increasing, say experts

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Gurgaon: For the first time, a sambar deer (Rusa unicolor) was caught on camera at Damdama on Saturday. Though the animal is not rare in the region, it has never been close to human habitat earlier.

The area, where the deer was spotted, comes under the district's second biodiversity park, which is being developed around the Damdama lake in four phases. It covers 500 acres across three villages of Khodja, Damdama and Abheyapur.

Suniti Harwana, the wildlife researcher who spotted the deer on camera, said the animal caught him by surprise. Along with teammate Nitesh Kaushik, Harwana has installed nine cameras in the Aravallis under a project funded by the Coexistence Consortium.

"A sambar was never spotted in Damdama before. This means that there is a rise in its population," he said. The deer is on the red list of the International Union for Conservation of Nature as a "vulnerable" species.

The animal is native to the Indian subcontinent and is usually confined to very dense forests. Hence, its sighting near human habitat is very rare. In February, a sambar deer was spotted in Mangar Bani.



Sambar deer is usually confined to dense forests

These sightings show a clear trend in the increase in population of this species, which according to experts is a good sign. Suniti Dookia, a wildlife researcher, said the nearest good population of sambar deer is in Sariska Tiger Reserve, apart from Alwar. "Since the sambar deer is a browser and feeds exclusively on shrubs, it is found in the Aravallis which still has good tree co-

ver as well as lower and middle canopy levels," Dookia said.

He said a small population of this species can also be found in Asolia Bharti. The sighting in Mangar region proves that wildlife still inhabits the Aravallis and is reclaiming lost corridors between these two wildlife habitats. There is still time to make an inclusive conservation plan for wildlife in this urban area," said Dookia.

In 2017, a study conducted by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) confirmed the presence of 10 carnivorous species in the Aravallis of south Haryana. According to a WII 2018 study (Ghamraj) in Solani recorded sightings of sambar, hyena and palm civet.

The institute has also recorded a population of 31 leopards, 168 jackals, 91 porcupines, 20 mongooses, 25 jungle cats, 125 hyenas, 61 civets, three wolves and four foxes in the area.

Important Articles Of The Month

DDA waiting for HC's order on remaining deer

Vibha.Sharma@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has so far relocated 203 out of the approximately 600 deer from the Deer Park in Hauz Khas to Kota in Rajasthan and is awaiting Delhi High Court's decision on the matter to shift the remaining deer.

The case was scheduled to be heard in court on March 21 but has now been adjourned for hearing on July 18, said DDA officials. In the last hearing in Feb, the court asked DDA to conduct a comprehensive census of deer inhabiting the park.

The court intervention came after a petition challenged the Central Zoo Authority's (CZA) decision last year to revoke Deer Park's licence as a "mini zoo".

The CZA mandated translocation of the animals due to their rapidly increasing numbers and inadequate staffing. According to CZA's order dated June 8, 2023, the animals were to be released in the natural habitats of Rajasthan (Kota) and Delhi (Asola) in the ratio of 70:30.

"While we had pursued CZA to shift the deer earlier because of their increasing numbers, they asked for closure as the population of the animals was growing rapidly and space was limited. While some deer were shifted, locals were against the move," said an official earlier.

Taking note of residents' sentiments, DDA decided to approach the CZA to permit habitation of some deer in the park. "However, with high court intervening in the matter, we decided to move as per the court's direction," said the official.



Media Coverage

HC ask DDA to hold Deer Census in Deer Park



PTI

Outlook India

Indian Express

Law Trend

Magzter

News9Live

Law Beat

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Below are a few tweets from the month of January about important nature-related stories from our @NDN_HQ page. Please click on the links to open the tweets and learn more about these fascinating topics. Our Twitter page is a great way to stay up-to-date with the latest news and events related to nature and conservation, so be sure to follow us for more updates!

Why the Forest Conservation Amendment Act 2023 may be deemed unconstitutional

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T.S. High court orders no more tree felling for cricket stadium at Manikonda

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NGT seeks reports from CPCB of Health impacts of polluting industries in Singrauli

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Supreme Court issues notice to center to question constitutionality of recent FCA amendments
(Forest conservation Act)

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10 Elephant sent to Gujarat from Arunachal Pradesh. What is the need?

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Grape Farmers spray pesticides on crops: the cause for Sore Throat Cough and fever.

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Construction initiated inside Okhla Bird sanctuary. An already disturbed eco-sensitive area

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Native Flowers For Local Biodiversity



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With the emphasis on local biodiversity, our focus on 'Native flowers for local biodiversity' became crucial in today's time as many people started to grow non-native flowers in their gardens for aesthetic and commercial purposes without having proper information about their ill effects on the local environment.

[Click Here to Read the Full Blog](#)



Project Manager/
Editor



Ms. Aysha Wamiq

Interns of the Month



Ms. Shreya Barnwal



Ms. Nandini Goswami



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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



For queries regarding CSR, please contact New Delhi Nature Society at info@ndns.in

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 1800118600
- 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 DEPARTMENT

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