

# Capital needs man-made forest urgently, says HC

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NEW DELHI: The capital needs a man-made forest, Delhi High Court said on Tuesday, flagging its concern over absence of dedicated green corridors beyond the Ridge area. Justice Jasmeet Singh also wondered why the forest department was not fully using the money accumulating every day in the Green Delhi Account - a fund created by HC while imposing fine over the defaulters in various criminal and civil matters to plant trees with the help of forest department. The fund has been thrown open to lawyers and anyone who wants to contribute to trees' welfare.

So far using the deposited money, plantation has been carried out in several parts of Central Ridge and Southern Ridge which have been named as Insaf Bagh and Mafi Bagh.

"Delhi needs a man-made forest" HC said, adding that the ridge is under tremendous pressure due to pollution and the city requires forests in other areas managed by the department exclusively.

"It has to be done on a war footing, an area where trees can be planted and is under control of the department," HC observed, asking the conservator of forests to appear via video conferencing on Wednesday to earmark land for planting trees.

HC was worried at the tardy pace and stressed the favourable season for planting of trees is going to be over soon. It prodded the department to utilise the green fund saying there should hardly be any amount lying unspent in the account.

The court also cautioned that from next month pollution levels may rise due to stubble burning, while asking the forest department to fast-track tree plantation. It was taking stock of tree plantation efforts across Delhi in a petition on the matter.

Last week HC had directed the authorities not to grant permission to fell trees for construction of houses. It had recorded Delhi government's stand that no permission to fell trees for any individuals would be granted and any permission required for important projects would be intimated to the court.

It sought a report on the status of transplanted and replanted trees after finding that the permissions granted by the department for felling of trees "seems to suggest that there is total non-application of mind while granting permissions".



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