

Chennai lost 955 trees for infrastructure projects in 2022

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CHENNAI: In the year 2022 alone, 955 trees were uprooted for infrastructure project implementation by agencies such as Metro rail, state highway department and Greater Chennai Corporation. Of these, 70% trees (about 717) were approved for transplantation. About 10% of them were protected by changing the alignment and pruning.

While tree felling has been accounted for, a monitoring system to check whether these agencies actually transplant and planted 10 trees for every tree cut is not in place.

This apart, there is no inspection on the survival rate of transplanted trees and newly -planted saplings. The district green committee was formed in 2022 to ensure no tree can be cut without its nod. Member of the

committee, T D Babu, trustee of Nizhal, an NGO stated,said, “Many trees in public places are cut without getting permission. Many incidents go unnoticed.”

For every proposal, the agency has to submit a plan for compensatory planting with location details for transplantation. “During inspections at several spots where trees were proposed to be chopped, grown-up shrubs like Tecoma stans, Musa paradisisca, Jasminium officinale and Tabernaemontana divaricata were observed within the scope area and inside the property, which were not accounted at all.

They need to be transplanted as instructed,” Babu stated. Shobha Menon, environmentalist stated, that “for ten new saplings to grow, it would take at least three to five years. Transplanting large trees is not always successful.

Many mature trees were found dead on campuses with large areas where transplantation took place are placed. There needs to be strict monitoring,” she said. Activists have called for the setting up of statutory bodies apart from green committee for monitoring and safeguarding the green infrastructure in the city.