



Collapsing trees weakened by uncaring civic work

20 May 2021

Ahmedabad: The cyclone has spelt havoc on big trees in the city drawing public attention to the large number of trees uprooted, but experts say Ahmedabad has been losing its trees and green cover every year to uncaring civic work and construction. The root structures of large shade-giving trees that anchor them to the earth are weakened continually by remorseless digging for utilities and wall-to-wall hard carpeting. Trees which gave shade for half a century or more get uprooted in minutes as the strengths of their bases keep being eroded by civic work. Experts stress that the civic body has poor and inefficient planning and focus in managing and maintaining trees. There is lack of urban policy in Ahmedabad to enforce mandatory distance from trees while engaging in construction work or digging for utility lines, including stormwater drainage or water lines. At least 2 feet space from the trunk of a tree needs to be left undisturbed by any type of construction work, say experts. On top of the digging and carpeting, poor soil curing and compaction after digging of roads also leads to cave-ins and weakening of tree roots. An expert said that the National Green Tribunal has specified in its guidelines that there should be at least a distance of 3 feet between the base of a tree and any concrete construction. In 2013, the NGT had directed Delhi's civic agencies to leave space of one metre radius from the bases of trees undisturbed, and directed a fine of Rs 10,000 imposed in case of each violation.

However, the NGT's guideline is not followed by civic authorities here, and trees are smothered by wall-to-wall carpeting

A senior civic body official said that trees need to be pruned and trimmed regularly to ensure the weight of the crown doesn't exceed the load-bearing capacity of the root structure, but this is not done and so trees in the city get uprooted every monsoon. Ahmedabad has a high number of trees with big crowns, and with already weakened root structures due to poor civic work, they collapse even under winds blowing at 40-50kmph speed. A former forest department officer, who had worked in social forestry said the laying of storm-water lines was done too close to roots without any buttress work to support the trees and thus they get uprooted easily in heavy winds

Source:<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ahmedabad/collapsing-trees-weakened-by-uncaring-civic-work/articleshow/82782637.cms>