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Concrete step to save city trees?

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New Delhi: Two days after TOI pointed out how trees were being choked by concrete in south Delhi's Sanjay Van for the construction of an outdoor gym, activists have met the vice-chairman of Delhi Development Authority, asking him to stop the concretisation of the soil floor of the green patches in city.

"We shared empirical data and photographs with the VC, to show how concretising green areas for outdoor gyms is detrimental to the environment. He agreed that the outdoor gyms should not be concretised and accepted our proposal to remove the concrete," said Verhean Khanna, founder of New Delhi Nature Society. Khanna said the activists pointed out that other civic agencies like the South Delhi Municipal Corporation and North Delhi Municipal Council have set up outdoor gyms without concrete flooring, which are working perfectly.

DDA officials couldn't be contacted for a response. "Doctors, environmentalists, fitness enthusiasts and senior citizens have expressed a preference to outdoor gyms with soil flooring instead of the expensive safety rubber on top of concrete flooring," Khanna said. "Since the outdoor gyms with artificial flooring are detrimental to the environment and does not serve any function besides decoration, there is a need to change the plan and remove all the artificial flooring which is covering the soil from all DDA outdoor gyms."

Earlier, a day after the TOI report, DDA de-choked the trees at Sanjay Van but the concrete flooring was kept for the under-construction gym.

"We found that a grassy area inside Sanjay Van was being cemented for an outdoor gym, including around the trees. We

informed the staff about the court order to remove cement from trees, but no action was taken. The next day when the story was in the news, within a few hours the cement was removed from the trees, according to the National Green Tribunal order dated April 23, 2013. Please notify all DDA parks to ensure open soil space up to 1 meter around every tree in their jurisdiction,” Khanna, in another letter to the DDA, said.

Sanjay Van is a city forest near Vasant Kunj and Mehrauli in south Delhi spread over 783 acres. NGT, in its order dated April 23, 2013, said: “They (authorities) shall ensure that the concrete surrounding the trees within one metre is removed forthwith... due precaution should be taken in future so that no concrete or construction or repairing work is done at least within one metre radius of the trunk of trees.”