THE TIMES OF INDIA

Forest dept to conduct tree census in capital

TNN | Sep 9, 2023, 10.49 AM IST

NEW DELHI: In a first, the forest department will conduct tree census. Delhi Tree Authority has passed the proposal of tree census and approved methodology of the exercise.

In the first phase, isolated patches will be covered. "It was decided that tree census will be first done in all isolated patches and green areas and city forest of forest and wildlife department. Data will be presented in the next meeting of Tree Authority," according to the minutes of the August 30 meeting.

Since this meeting was held after a gap of over one-and-a-half year, it was also decided that the meeting should be "held without fail in last week of third month as mandated in the DPTA, 1994." The parameters identified for carrying out census are the GPS coordinates of every tree will be recorded along with its location, land type (private or government), girth from ground and health. The surveyor will also take pictures of tree, bark, and leaves.

A census of trees is conducted to record their number in a colony, age, health, and conditions. It helps residents and authorities to understand, prioritise, plan and action what needs to be done.

Activist Bhavreen Kandhari, who has been demanding tree census for years, said, "The government support for a comprehensive tree census is surely a welcome step. It will help to track the trees, discourage illegal felling, and help to monitor urban forests and plan for conservation. But this isn't the first time that the proposal for tree census has been taken up. There have been discussions for many decades on proposals, procedure, and

methodology for tree census. The difference would be that it is taken up in letter and spirit on the ground with the support of experts from civil society."

Though the forest department is yet to conduct tree census in the city, a few NGOs and RWAs have done this to protect greenery in their area. The latest tree census was done by a group of 13 residents in Saket's D block for a period of over seven months in 2022 and they found 680 trees in residential areas and 930 in parks. Of the total trees in residential areas, 62% (419 trees) were concretised and 52 trees diseased. Tree census was also conducted by residents and activists in Vasant Vihar in 2016-17, Sarvodaya Enclave in 2016-17, Gulmohar Park in 2013 and GK-2 in 2015-16.