

# HC: Green space in Delhi better than remote forest

TNN | Jul 5, 2023, 06.59 AM IST



NEW DELHI: A green space in the midst of a thickly-populated residential area is of far greater value than a forest "kilometres away from a human habitation", the Delhi high court has said, forbidding authorities from destroying the natural grass in Siri Fort Sports Complex (SFSC).

DDA planned to replace it with artificial turf in the hockey and football fields but was taken to court by a senior citizen who challenged the move.

"SFSC lies in the heart of South Delhi and the adjoining greenery needs to be protected at all costs, as the entire area is a green lung for the city," Justice Najmi Waziri observed in a recent order.

"The laying of artificial turf will be an irreversible damage to not

only the football and hockey fields but to the contiguous green area and is likely to affect the people using the immediately adjacent walking path," the court noted.

Ecology of green pockets in city crucial, says HC Ruling against DDA's plan to convert the natural grass in the football and hockey fields at Siri Fort Sports Complex to artificial turf, the high court underlined that in a city like Delhi, the ecology of small pockets of green areas, which serve as its lungs, is crucial and fragile and therefore greater caution and sensitivity has to be exercised.

"There can hardly be a case for this city being robbed of its green spaces in a few years only because in one

project or the other, there is resultant concretisation of the earth. Today it is two sports fields, tomorrow it would be something else," Justice Najmi Waziri said, reminding DDA of its duty to ensure that the natural environment is maintained, safeguarded and improved.

"The environment is much larger than a simple football or hockey field... Development is not always the creation of roads, buildings, civic or industrial infrastructure etc. In a world of technology, travel and tearing hurry, development is also manifested in the retention of delicate ecology and green areas of a neighbourhood, so as to maintain the environmental equilibrium for posterity," the court said.

"Such conversion...of artificial turf will have to be abandoned by the DDA. The direction of the Supreme Court and of the National Green Tribunal to DDA (to not cut the large number of trees in and around the SFSC) and to 'ensure that the entire complex is duly maintained' is of much significance and was for the purpose of protecting the greenery in the entire area," Justice Waziri further noted.

"The football and hockey fields which presently have natural grass shall not be destroyed or altered to artificial turf," it directed, while hearing a plea by Sudhir Gupta.

The court also highlighted that recently, FIFA-related football World Cup events were held on natural grass and even Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata, which earlier had an artificial turf, has replaced it with a natural grass field.