

# my KOLKATA

## Heritage-tag plea for trees 200 years old in Kolkata

19 April 2023

Every 200-year-old tree in every block of the state should be identified and preserved as heritage, which will promote biodiversity in the area, West Bengal Biodiversity Board chairman H.S. Debnath said on Tuesday.

He was making a presentation on Bengal's biodiversity heritage on the occasion of World Heritage Day, being celebrated by the state heritage commission at Nandan.

Asked if certain green parts of neighbourhoods in south Kolkata can be preserved as biodiversity hotspots, Debnath said: "If we manage to identify even one 200-year-old tree in every block of the state, which has a total of 342 blocks, we will have 300 heritage or ancient trees, which will promote biodiversity in the area."

"Instead of spending Rs 15-20 lakh on developing a biodiversity park, we can just identify trees like the banyan, Pakur (Golden Rumph's fig), kamranga (star fruit tree), phalsha (Indian sherbet berry), anshphal (longan or dragon's eye), gab (Indian persimmon), and others, fence them, identify them as ancient trees and prevent them from being cut down. All this can be done for just Rs 10,000."

These trees become spots where birds, insects, various flora and fauna thrive, making them a microcosm of biodiversity.

Recently, heritage enthusiasts have been up in arms about developers demolishing not just heritage properties but also the trees on the grounds of the properties.

Asked what he thought of the proposal to preserve individual trees as heritage, author Amit Chaudhuri, part of Calcutta Architectural Legacies, said: "What the chairman is saying is good, though any such measure has to be attempted imaginatively. Speaking from experience, I can say that biodiversity is a living thing in Sunny Park that we take for granted. The flowering of seasonal plants and sighting of rare birds make it a pocket of biodiversity. Here, an old building will be developed, destroying the last remnants of biodiversity in the area. Commercial transactions of private property cannot be stopped but we have to find ways to preserve such spots to prevent the alarming heating up of the city."

He urged Debnath to identify such spaces in the city that can be preserved as biodiversity hotspots.

West Bengal Heritage Commission chairman Alapan Bandyopadhyay stressed the need to preserve natural heritage along with built and intangible heritage.

Source: <https://www.telegraphindia.com/my-kolkata/news/heritage-tag-plea-for-trees-200-years-old-in-kolkata/cid/1930674>