

Build flyover without cutting a single tree, set an example: Greens

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Nagpur: What was meant to be a public hearing on felling of 126 trees for a flyover turned out to be just not that. According to environmentalists, a public hearing is supposed to be an event where protesters gather in numbers and their voices are heard unitedly. However, in the case of tree-felling for a flyover between Bole Petrol Pump Square to Futala Lake, individuals were called into a room one at a time to register their protests.

The unusual process left the complainants highly dissatisfied on the first day. “The Tree Act says public hearing and not individual. The Nagpur Municipal Corporation made a complete mockery of the word hearing, turning the entire process futile. There is no transparency or open discussion,” they told TOI.

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A lot of citizens who submitted objections said that the civic body called the meeting at a very short notice. “Many of us had to face difficulty as Thursday was a working day,” they added.

As per NMC officials, the hearing would be continued for next two-to-three weeks so that all the complainants get a chance to put forth their views.



On the first day, city environmentalists demanded sustainable development. “Build the flyover without cutting a single tree. This way, we can set an example for other cities. The authorities need to modify the flyover’s design. Also, we want the traffic assessment study to understand whether the flyover is needed or not. If yes, then what is the need to keep it so wide and have a cycling track on it,” asked environmentalist Anasuya Kale Chhabrani.

The permission to fell these trees has been sought by the sub-divisional engineer of the Public Works Department (PWD).

“Where are the compensatory plantations of 62 trees that were felled by the public works department in 2014-15. How can NMC even consider granting permission to this agency which has violated the state tree act and failed to maintain mandatory plantations,” asked green crusader Kunal Mourya.

Members of NGO Green Vigil Foundation sought to know whether alternate routes for the flyover were explored. “We need to go for the best route with suitability and less tree chopping. Also, growth factor of only two trees — sal and teak — have been notified by state. Then how did NMC land up calculating age of tree with maximum age 49, and not reaching 50 in any of the case,” they asked, adding that scientific, achievable and guaranteed compensatory plantation should be done before the project is taken up.

Another point of discussion was the declining green cover in the city. “When a tree census has not been done in recent years, how can the guardians of our trees even think of granting permissions to fell more trees? We don’t have a clear picture of what the ground reality is. NMC should keep all applications for major tree felling on hold till a census is done,” added Chhabrani.