

# Delhi's Greater Kailash-I RWA fined Rs 60,000 for cutting down tree in park

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NEW DELHI: The residents' welfare association of S Block, Greater Kailash I, has been fined Rs 60,000 by Delhi government's department of environment and forest department for chopping down a tree in a park. A complaint in this regard had been filed at the local police station and with the forest department in December last year by South Delhi Municipal Corporation's horticulture department.

The penal action was taken under the Delhi Preservation of Tree Act, 1994, by the office of deputy conservator of forest, southern range, Tughlaqabad. In a show-cause notice issued on September 14, the RWA was found guilty of illegal tree felling and fined Rs 60,000 under Section 21 of the Act. "We took the decision after inspections," said a forest department official.

"We received the notice through WhatsApp and we have been instructed to pay the amount within seven days. How can we pay such a big amount in this time?" asked M K Gupta, president of S Block RWA. "The penalty will demotivate other RWAs in taking care of their green areas."

The RWA claimed that two-thirds of the 40-year-old tree had fallen down last year after being damaged by termites. The remaining portion posed a danger to park visitors, and so it had got it removed after a joint inspection with SDMC officials, it said.

“When we are putting so much effort in maintaining the parks, why would we hurt any tree?” argued Gupta. “In fact, we have planted hundreds of saplings to ensure greenery.”

Even if the tree was damaged, the RWA should have informed us within 24 hours, maintained the forest official. “Taking steps to remove the tree without informing the forest department is an offence. However, if they are finding the fine amount too high, we can extend the time to pay it if they request so,” he added.

For its part, SDMC denied visiting the area or permitting the chopping of the tree. “We have no authority to give such permissions. In fact, residents complained to us and we approached the forest department,” said an SDMC official.