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Establishing Chinar Park in Srinagar

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Establishing of the proposed Kashmir's largest Chinar Park, "Chinar Zaar" in the foothills of the Zabarwan Mountains at Nishat in Srinagar, is an important step.

But, equally important is safeguarding thousands of heritage Chinar trees across Kashmir.

The Chinar trees have been suffering massive damage due to an onslaught in the name of urbanisation and development through construction of roads and buildings or widening of roads.

Illegal felling of trees for making profit out of its wood, and some natural factors also worsened the problem.

Chinar trees, which existed in large numbers in villages, towns, and Srinagar city even in 1970s were ruthlessly cut for decades despite law prohibiting it. The number of such trees kept on drastically dwindling from 42,000 in 1970s.

It is being roughly estimated that Kashmir has below 19,000 Chinar trees right now, including those that have grown after being planted since 1970s. According to experts, it takes around 30 to 50 years for the tree to reach its mature height and around 150 years to grow to full size.

Till recently, it was being widely believed that the oldest (648 years old) and biggest Chinar is standing at Chatturgul in Chadoora in Budgam district.

But, according to officials an ongoing census by government has found at some places in valley older trees than that at Chatturgul.

The exercise was started last year and is likely to be completed in February next year. Government will have to take major steps to ensure that the existing Chinar trees are fully protected. Illegal felling of the trees has to be stopped.

The trees need to be safeguarded from natural factors including diseases. Advice from experts from non-government side too should be sought and any advice offered should not be outrightly rejected. More plantation of Chinar trees must be done across Kashmir.

Hopefully the developing of the Chinar Park on 400 kanals of land in Srinagar will encourage the plantation trend. Reports say 300 Chinar trees will be planted in the park, and 75 were planted by the district administration a few days back on Independence Day.

All such and other measures should be taken by the government so that Chinar trees, which are part and parcel of Kashmiri heritage, continue to exist in large number.

Source: <https://www.greaterkashmir.com/todays-paper/editorial-page/establishing-chinar-park-in-srinagar>