

Forest dept to HC: Order issued to protect trees on key road

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New Delhi: Delhi's forest department has issued an order to protect trees along Shaheed Bhagat Singh Marg, the high court was informed on Wednesday.

The department submitted a "restraintment order" dated Jan 19, passed by deputy conservator of forest (North), directing that there should be no root damage, illegal felling, pruning or any offence under the Delhi Preservation of Trees Act (DPTA), 1994, with respect to trees on the central verge of the road from Tilak Nagar Circle to Hari Nagar. The road is maintained by PWD.

The court was hearing a plea by New Delhi Nature Society seeking contempt proceedings against officials for allegedly failing to comply with earlier orders to protect these trees. The high court had earlier sought the department's response and directed the SHO, Hari Nagar, to ensure compliance and act on complaints.

In its latest application, the society said it was found in Nov last year that several trees were damaged, with roots cut and exposed due to removal of earth from the central verge. It alleged that construction work was being carried out within two metres of the tree trunks on the central verge of Shaheed Bhagat Singh Marg, Tilak Nagar, violating court norms.

The plea claimed PWD was using earth-moving machines to build barriers for a project. "Despite a complaint being filed on the helpline set up under court directions, no action was taken. No steps were taken as per the

SOP mandated by this court," the application stated.

Seeking contempt action, the petitioner said the HC had in 2024 ordered Delhi govt to implement the draft Delhi Preservation of Trees SOP, which requires a quick reaction team to be dispatched immediately and lays down a step-by-step procedure to address complaints of tree damage or felling.

The plea added that when the concerned tree officer failed to act, a communication was sent to police, but no action was taken till the filing of the petition.