

# HC okays felling of trees to build Ooty medical college

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The Madras high court has permitted the state government to cut 1,838 trees standing on the 25-acre allotted for a government medical college in Ooty.

A division bench of Justice M Sathyanarayanan and Justice R Hemalatha vacated the stay after authorities informed the court that the trees proposed to be uprooted were neither native species nor part of Shola forest, but only commercial trees like eucalyptus.

The issue pertains to a PIL moved by advocate V Ramesh who wanted the court to restrain the state from constructing new buildings for the hospital on the land and to utilise the existing buildings of Hindustan Photo Films which is now defunct.

On September 14, the court passed an interim order prohibiting the state from felling trees in the site but permitted it to construct new buildings.

Now, requesting the court to vacate the stay, advocate-general of Tamil Nadu Vijay Narayan submitted that the earmarked trees were not native trees and they also do not form part of Shola Forests which existed during colonial period.

“Therefore, cutting and removing the trees to pave way for establishment of a medical college hospital would not lead to any ecological imbalance or environmental degradation,” Vijay Narayan said.

“We assured the court that scientific method/norms would be adopted for cutting, removal and storage of the trees. As regards the auction of the trees is concerned, it will be done subject to further orders to be passed by this court,” he added.

As per the list provided by the AG, de-marked trees are 1,683 Eucalyptus Globulus, 1 Eucalyptus Grandis, 59 Accasia Mearnsil, 39 Pinus Pettula, 13 Accasia Melonoxylum, 2 Michalia Chenpaga, 39 Cypress Couprosses, and 2 Phodocarpus Latifolia.

Recording the submissions, the bench said: “This court, on careful perusal of the materials and consideration of the rival submissions, is of the considered view that the felling of the trees can be done, in the light of the clearances obtained, the details of which, have been narrated in the affidavits filed.”