



### **HC takes strong note of 'victimisation of trees'**

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New Delhi: Taking note of what it dubbed as "victimisation of trees" Delhi High Court has demanded an explanation from South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) and the AAP government on why hundreds of trees had been concretised in south Delhi.

The court was hearing a plea seeking preservation of trees and failure of agencies to comply with orders passed by courts and the National Green Tribunal against concretising of trees. The court was shocked by some of the photographs and noted that "right up to the tree trunk, nails had been embedded and metallic wires been strung along the trees."

Justice Najmi Waziri noted that this was "evident victimisation of the trees" and pointed out that SDMC, which maintains the streets inside residential colonies, would have noted it "but has, for reasons best known to it, allowed the callous affair to fester for years."

It further directed the deputy commissioner, SDMC, to file an affidavit explaining "how this unfortunate state has come about" and made it clear that the executive engineer and director (Horticulture) concerned would also fix responsibility and take remedial measures.

The court made the tree officer of the area, deputed by the forest department, a party to the petition filed by environment activist Bhavreen Kandhari. She submitted that last year she even complained to the tree officer on victimisation of trees and illegal activities, where trees on the streets had been concretised..

The court noted that "concretisation of the street is unmindful of the directions of this court and that of the NGT. It shows disregard of the law not only by the municipal corporation, but by the road maintaining agency – Public Works Department" and directed them to file an affidavit.

The bench also asked the local SHO and the DCP to explain how the concretisation was allowed in the first place. The plea said instead of taking action against the offenders on the complaint filed to the tree officer, notice was issued to the Vasant Vihar Welfare Association, which was actually involved in preserving the trees in the said colony.

After studying the efforts by the residents, including children and senior citizen, the court observed that "the efforts of the Residents' Welfare Association for preserving the ecology of the area should be encouraged." The court then posted the matter for next week when it would examine the stand of the agencies.

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