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Short of space, Delhi Development Authority seeks leeway on planting trees

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NEW DELHI: As finding vacant land for compensatory afforestation for different projects has become increasingly difficult, Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has requested Delhi government to relax the norm of planting 10 saplings for each tree being cut to two under Delhi Preservation of Trees Act, 1994.

MAKING UP FOR LOST GREEN COVER

Photo for representation

9.6 metres | Per capita forest cover in Delhi, highest among major Indian cities
 ➤ **Approx area DDA provided for compensatory afforestation**

2021 130 hectares
2020 120 hectares

DELHI'S GREEN COVER*

21.9% | Delhi's green cover in 2019, 129 sqkm

23% | in 2021, 147 sqkm

324.4 sqkm | Overall green cover (forest cover and tree cover) in 2019

342 sqkm | Overall green cover in 2021

*According to the India State of Forest Report



➤ DDA has requested Delhi govt to relax norms under Delhi Preservation of Trees Act, 1994, to reduce ratio of compensatory afforestation from a ratio of 1:10 to 1:2

➤ DDA had last month written to the ministry of environment and forest to allow it to carry out plantation in neighbouring states due to paucity of land in Delhi

According to India State of Forests Report 2021, Delhi's green cover went up from 21.9% in 2019 to 23% in 2021 and its overall green cover, including forest and tree cover, went up from 324.4 square km in 2019 to 342 sq km in 2021. According to officials, the increase in tree cover has largely been due to the mandate of planting 10 saplings for each tree felled for any development project.

Providing space for compensatory afforestation is becoming increasingly difficult for DDA due to an acute shortage of land. Last month, it also wrote to Union ministry of environment and forests (MoEF) to allow it to carry out plantation in neighbouring states. It wrote that unlike most other states, Delhi was largely an urban area with little land available for plantation purposes.

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The authority has now written to the Delhi chief secretary to revise the current guidelines for compensatory afforestation from a ratio of 1:10 to 1:2. DDA has requested that it may not be possible for it to allot land for compensatory afforestation, which would adversely impact many upcoming infrastructure projects.



"As most recreational zones identified under Master Plan of Delhi for greenery are saturated with plantation, DDA is now finding it extremely difficult to make the space available for compensatory plantation," said Rajeev Kumar Tiwari, DDA's principal commissioner (horticulture).

Tiwari added, ""The plantation success rate in Delhi has been very good and a third party audit done by Forest Research Institute, Dehradun has revealed a survival rate of 80-90%. Now the green cover of Delhi is 23%, making it the greenest metropolitan city in the country. In view of the increased green cover, scarcity of available space and excellent survival percentage, DDA has requested that the present norm of 1:10 plantation be reduced to 1:2."

To tide over the challenge of finding land for planting saplings, DDA had requested MoEF last month to relax some provisions of Forest Conservation Act, 1980 so that Delhi could carry out plantation in neighbouring Haryana or Uttar Pradesh, where finding land for this purpose would be comparatively easy.

DDA had also written that it had not made any fresh land acquisition in the past couple of decades in the city, making it difficult to allocate land for plantation.