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# Stilt parking causing green cover loss?

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Gurgaon: Environmentalists on Sunday complained to chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar about the “illogical” felling of thousands of trees in residential areas by builders and residents to create stilt parking at the boundary of multi-storey houses.

The complaint said this rampant felling was permitted under Haryana’s building bylaws that allowed people to create stilt parking. Gradually, every inch is being concretised in the city, including the periphery of private plots, it said.

“Trees outside the plots are chopped down after getting permission from MCG (Municipal Corporation of Gurgaon) and the forest department. MCG is issuing NOC (no-objection certificates) and forest officials are providing residents with permissions,” said Vivek Kamboj, a city-based environmentalist who submitted the complaint on the CM Window.

Thousands of trees have been cut down, some chopped in half or their bases choked with concrete by the builders of 4-storied housing, the complaint added, saying that it was possible because of an amendment in the rules.

The town and country planning department (DTCP) on June 1, 2020, made stilt parking mandatory for the construction of third and fourth floors in towns falling under hyper-potential category i.e. Gurugram Manesar Urban Complex. Under these revised rules, four floors can be constructed on residential plots with the provision of stilt parking. A building without stilt parking can only construct up to three floors.

As an architectural pattern, such 4-storey houses have end-to-end entrance gates all along the facade of the building to accommodate more cars in the stilt parking, the complaint said. This leaves little space for roadside trees.

“Stilt parking, end-to-end gates at the facade of a plot have led to this mindless development. And this is the case for every urban town and city of Haryana. Although this amendment has been an excellent source of revenue generation for your government, no focus has been on livability and green cover,” Kamboj said.

Gurgaon’s total forest area was recorded at 113.71 sq km between October 2019 to February 2020, according to a report by the Forest Survey of India’s (FSI).

“The blatant mindless act of destroying all green cover has made this city unliveable, unbreathable and with high temperatures in summer. The government should undertake measures to save every possible tree within city limits. Your flawed town and country planning amendments have made all urban areas of Haryana concrete jungles and heat islands,” said Vaishali Rana, a Gurgaon-based activist who is also one of the complainants.

When asked about the issue, a forest official conceded that: “Yes, tree felling has increased in the city in the last two years because of the stilt parking provision. MCG is responsible for giving NOC.”

MCG officials, however, said they have not issued any such permits in the last one year. “Tree felling because of stilt parking is an issue but I have not issued any tree felling permission since June 2, 2021 in Gurgaon,” said Subhash Yadav, nodal officer of the MCG and Gurgaon Metropolitan Development Authority’s environment wing.

Experts on Sunday also demanded a law on the lines of the Delhi Preservation of Trees Act, 1994. The law mandates that for every tree being cut, a person will have to deposit Rs 34,500 with the forest department and plant 10 saplings. For civic agencies, the cost is Rs 57,000 per tree. The norms also include imprisonment of 7 years for illegal felling of trees.

Haryana does not have any such Act to preserve its urban green cover.

When asked about this, the MCG official cited above said a proposal has been sent to the Haryana government. “We are hoping to get the government’s approval soon,” he said.