

## Green Court bans tree felling in South Delhi



After overwhelming protests from locals and green activists over, National Green Tribunal, the Green Court has banned the tree felling for redevelopment project in Delhi by NBCC and CPWD till 19th of July.

The Central Government had proposed a housing redevelopment project for seven government colonies in South Delhi, which required felling down of around 17000 trees to clear the land area for construction. In the wake of aggressive protest from locals and environment activists, an NGO named Society for Protection of Culture, Heritage, Environment, Traditions & Promotion of National Awareness filed a petition in the National Green Tribunal Court (NGT) claiming that the permission of felling trees is granted without taking ecological factors into consideration.

The NGO argued that the demand would have been relevant if the trees were to be cut for widening the road, but if it is solely for constructing houses, then government should reconsider their decision. The government has also assured the residents of involved areas to compensate the loss by planting new saplings, equal to the number of trees cut down. But it is illogical to say that those saplings will compensate the loss of trees grown over decades, and hence the residents are reluctant to agree on this condition. After hearing to the NGO, the tribunal has issued notices to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Central Pollution Control Board, CPWD, NDMC and others, asking them to file their responses before 19 July.

Current NGT chairperson Justice Jawad Rdahim along with other NGT officials has also commanded National Buildings Construction Corporation to submit a clear statement about the number of trees to be cut for the project. In the words of the chairperson, "We direct the respondents (NBCC and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs) to maintain status quo, particularly relating to felling of trees, and direct that there shall be no felling, cutting or destruction of trees till further order by this Tribunal. Further, we direct the project proponent to make a categoric statement with regard to actual number of trees they intend to fell." The NGO has requested for the trees to be saved and to carry out the project without any harm to the nature. This request might bring about a new idea to harmonize humans' needs with ecological balance and a relief to Delhi's polluted atmosphere.