

# Call this number before the axe falls



The tree unit office can stop this, if you let them know where it's happening

By Kanak Hirani  
Times News Network

axed. But this isn't the time to ask who was responsible. What Bangaloreans should do is figure out who the best person is to contact the next time something like this happens.

If you see a healthy tree being chopped, what can you do to stop it? First of all, call the forest department at 3334364. That's their tree unit office. A team of officers will make it to the spot.

And guess what? The forest department will soon set up four tree units in different areas of the city. Each unit will be equipped with a vehicle and a staff of four. It will take another five months to equip them completely," says the deputy conservator of forests (urban) Vijaykumar Gogoi.

When *Bangalore Times* asked him how long it would take for someone to arrive at the spot, he said travel time plus another 45 minutes if they were out on the field. That's probably the amount of time it would take to axe the tree anyway. "We are set up at Malleswaram. Even if a fire brigade had to get into action, it would take as long. If we are near, our team will react in 15 minutes," he promises.

But enough of promises. Let's talk action. Who decides that a tree is to be chopped? It's the DCF (Urban) who gives the permission. The tree court is the recommendation authority. If an officer inspects the spot and rejects the application to chop a tree, he can go to the tree court which decides. The enforcement of regulating felling lies with the forest department.

The tree court meets at the Aranya Bhavan conference hall on the third Saturday of every month at 3 pm.

Like people make requests for planting trees, they can also request permission to fell them. The reasons quoted should satisfy the tree authorities and environmentalists in Bangalore. When the inspector is satisfied that the plan will develop the area by planting some new trees, permission is granted. The price and cons are decided by a jury of 20 people.

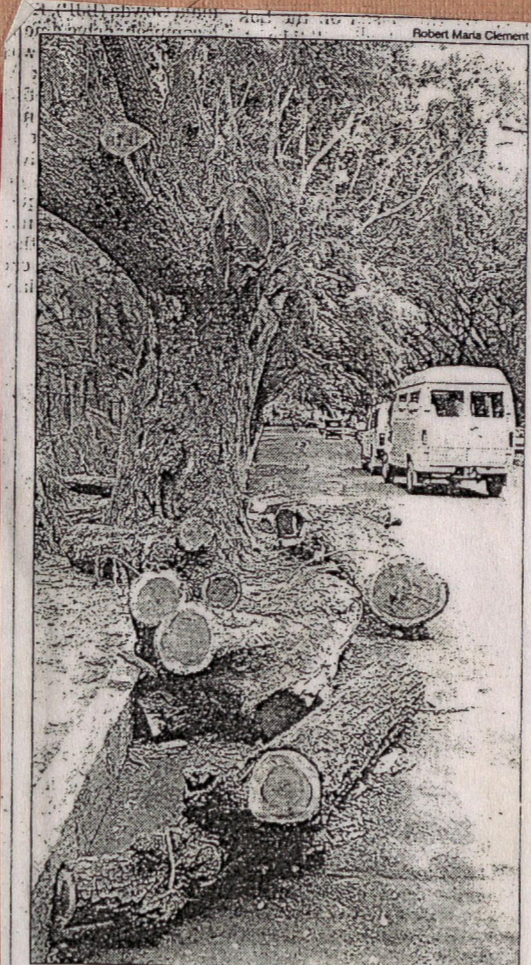
"If we don't believe they will replant the tree growth, we can ask them to remit a certain amount with us or pledge National Savings Certificate worth a certain amount which will be returned to them once the trees are planted," Gogoi explains.

But why cut a tree? Some people give lame excuses like a tree doesn't agree with the vastu of the house and hence it has to be cut down. Or that it's aggravating allergies. And according to some forest officials, nearly 30 per cent of these complaints are silly. Of late, people don't look at the benefits a tree is giving us.

Irritants like the above are negligible. And most of the time, people are not convinced by the reasons we give them when we reject applications," says an official from the forest department.

When numerous trees were axed for the construction of the flyover, the necessary authorities had applied to the forest department and the BCC had requested permission to fell trees.

In several instances people have even been punished for felling trees without permission. People are penalised depending on the category of the tree. If it's a sandal or rosewood tree, punishment can go up to seven years imprisonment. However, since Bangalore has primarily ornamental trees, most people are not aware of this. The price and cons are decided by a jury of 20 people.



This tree in Jayanagar was chopped on the request of a resident. But environmentalists are crying foul.

## Healthy tree gets the axe

Bangalore: A healthy tree in Jayanagar was chopped on the request of a resident. The tree was about 40 years old and almost dead. The resident wanted the tree removed because it was a nuisance. The tree was chopped on the request of a resident in Jayanagar. The tree was about 40 years old and almost dead. The resident wanted the tree removed because it was a nuisance. The tree was chopped on the request of a resident in Jayanagar.



Members of the Bharat Scouts and Guides with tree cut-outs during their campaign "Save Tree for good air", organised by the ECO-Watch in Bangalore on Saturday.

## 'Save our trees, avoid air pollution'

"Trees are felled to make way for tall structures. Environmental assets are targets for developers"

BANGALORE, DHS: Grit, determination and initiative was common to the 700-odd children gathered for an awareness campaign on air pollution reduction at the Bharat Scouts and Guides headquarters in Bangalore on Saturday. They were out to make a difference however small.

The campaign, was organised as part of the courtesy month by Eco-Watch and the Transport Department, to fight air pollution, environmental degradation, human and vehicular pollution. Children indulged in poster making, campaign drives and in air quality monitoring exercises.

The one-day campaign was marked by skits, plays and short films on the environment by student groups and environmental activists.

"Trees are felled to make way for tall structures. Environmental assets are targets for developers. But, the topography of Bangalore city does not permit such hard and crude development," said Suresh Heblikar, Chairman Eco-Watch.

The ten-minute film titled 'Life on Wheels', captured striking scenes of reckless driving, ghastly accidents and deaths. The skit was based on the destruction of environment. The message that came through is that there can be no life without a good environment.

The Karnataka State Pollution Control Board lent its support by demonstrating and educating the children on the effects of pollution.

## Tree felled? Call 6534364 now

ANAND BALAJI

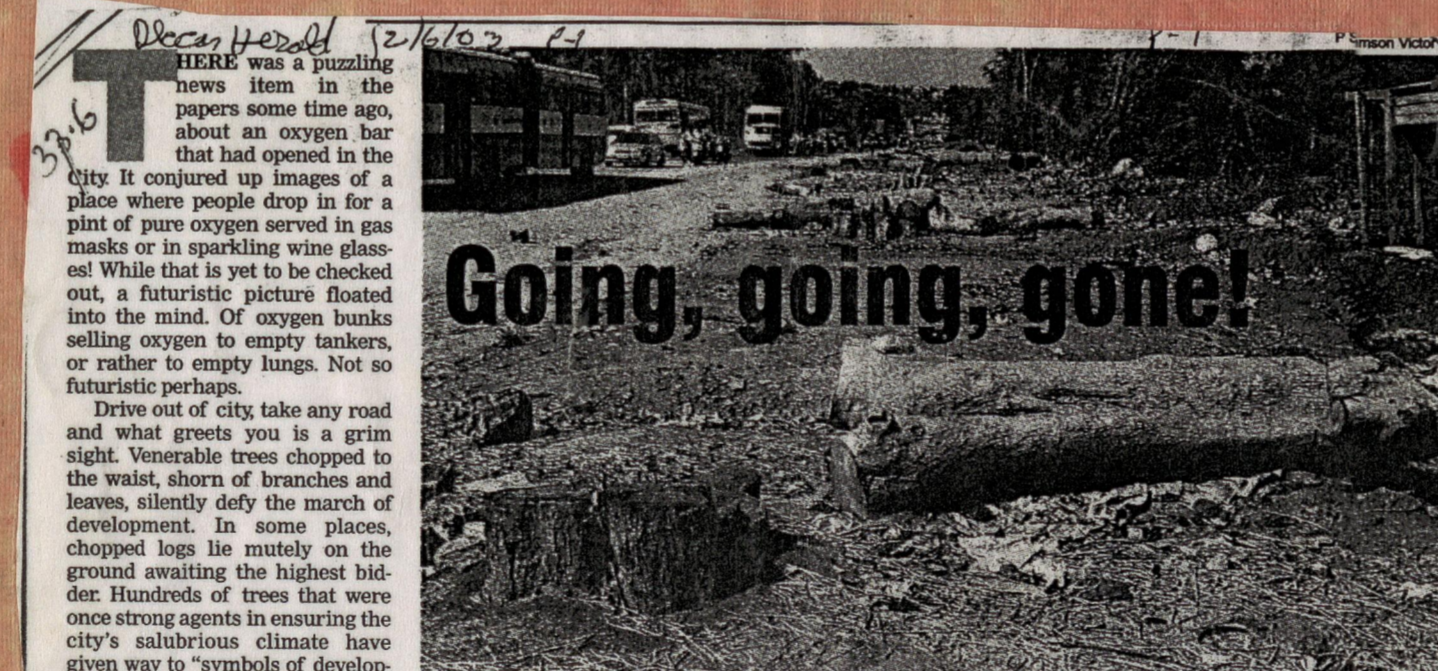
If denizens had their way the KPTCL would soon be in the dock for their erratic chopping of trees in the city. This statement might not come as a shock to many readers because at some point in time or the other residents in various localities in the haphazard tree felling by the power department.

A few conscientious citizens far from merely complaining, got together and established a helpline to address matters related to tree felling. And all this was done in the light of a Karnataka High Court ruling in July that pulled up the State government and public authorities for indiscriminate axing of trees in the state. The Environment Support Group (ESG) that has been actively involved in campaigning for lung spaces and credited for the above mentioned helpline has thus far received nearly 'five calls which required immediate attention' with two of them being 'top priority'.

"Following the chopping of nearly 9,000 trees on the Bangalore-Mysore highway earlier this year, ESG and other environment organisations began receiving a flurry of calls from concerned citizens. Our helpline aims to provide solutions to anyone who has a complaint against civic authorities or private owners cutting down trees," explains Deepashree, research assistant. At present, ESG functions on a basic level, in that, they direct the caller to the concerned forest officials or other authorities who would be in a position to guide them. "Since we launched the helpline just a few days ago we need more time to chalk out our plans. Resources are a major crunch here," says Deepashree.

Though all the calls that ESG receives are tree-related, the reasons vary. While some people call to report a termite-infested tree, others want to know how to combat overnight felling. The more serious complaints are courtesy the KPTCL against whom several people want to initiate legal action. "We are campaigning to see that even pruning of trees is completely stopped. Trees often get well following the shoddy treatment meted out to them by the linesmen," rues Deepashree.

Right now though, for every tree that is axed, two new saplings have to be planted in their place. That's not all, they have to be looked after for a period of two years after that. Only time will tell if the helpline is successful in protecting the city's trees from destruction.



Going, going, gone!

Unwept and unsung, these sentinels of the Garden City fall, one by one. As the city races towards development, the casualties are old and venerable trees that must make way for sleek flyovers, highways, road medians and apartment blocks

3000 hectares around Bangalore. A few individuals and organisations are doing their bit. Like Suresh Heblikar's Senaranya Project started in 2000 which aims to convert 400 acres of army land at the ASC into dense forest cover with 2.5 lakh trees. And then of course, there are the Cubbon Park, Lalbagh Golf Grounds, etc.

But all is not hunky-dory. Ask any old-timer and he will wax eloquent about the good old days when there was no summer in the city, and when there was water in plenty for everyone. The reason is not too far to find. The trees, which had had a merry time under the sun, multiplying and spreading cheer, absorbed the heat and helped with heavenly showers.

Now, as every resident knows the mercury is rising and the water table sinking. With trees that help in wind dispersion gone, concrete structures end up trapping the hot air in heat islands. The monsoon has sulked long enough.

Trees. We need more trees. Is there a way to revive the Garden City? The BMP town planning chairman, Mr N A Venkatesh, is confident that under the scheme to increase green cover, much of the damage will be reversed. There is a plan to plant five lakh trees this year, he says, while swearing by the city's minister's plan to churn a Singapore out of the wildly growing city. Undertaking to have one park/garden in every ward is another plan in the greening of the city but what of the many hundred year old trees mercilessly being cut? Can't we save them?

Mr Vijaykumar Gogoi, DCF (urban), Forest Department, would rather adopt what he calls the mid path - of nurturing love for trees in the people rather than preserving old trees. He is equally practical about loss of trees to development. "Today we cannot afford to turn our backs on development," he says, observing that for every tree lost, compensatory planting is mandatory. In the rule book, sounds neat. But how far are the rules adhered to? Who ensures that the saplings grow to adulthood?

Is it that we do not realise the importance of trees? "In our study conducted in the Sharavathi basin, we have shown how perennial streams exist where there are evergreen and endemic species while elsewhere there are only seasonal streams. The variety of trees is important also in ensuring a healthy groundwater table," says Prof T V Ramachandra of IISc.

If you have will to save the trees, you can and have your roads too, says one expert. "Why hasn't the BMP thought of retaining the tree as part of the median while widening the road? How can you replace a 500-year-old tree that plays such a vital role in biodiversity?" On what he thinks is the solution, he strikes a grave note. "Nothing can be done because no one cares."

In the UK, authorities are using DNA from the tree tissue to fingerprint the tree and match it with a database to ensure whether the roots accused of creeping into the foundation of the neighbour's house are indeed doing so. A far cry from the kind of mindless massacre taking place at our doorsteps. But who will step out and cry halt?

Jayalakshmi K

## State's undertaking to High court GO on planting saplings before felling trees soon

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33.6

BANGALORE, July 30: The State government has given an undertaking to the Karnataka High Court that it would soon pass an executive order directing the authorities concerned to plant two saplings before cutting a tree. Not only that, the State has also indicated to the court that immediate action would be taken to make necessary changes to the rules and regulations in this regard.

The State Chief Secretary B S Patil has given this undertaking in response to the direction given by the High Court earlier this month to submit a report on the action taken by the government to implement the formula laid down by the court for preserving trees.

The High Court had for the first time in the country had laid down - first replace and then re-

move - formula for preserving greenery in the State.

A division bench comprising Justice M F Saldanha and Justice M S Rajendra Prasad, which has gone through an affidavit filed by the Chief Secretary, has commended the State government for its prompt action to implement the High Court's directions.

The bench had earlier pulled up the government for failing to check indiscriminate felling of trees and had ordered that the authorities concerned should plant saplings before felling a tree and take care of newly planted saplings for at least two years.

The bench had pointed out that over 19,800 trees have been cut on the Mysore-Bangalore road and on the various other highways in the last one year and

that 9,000 trees have been cut down in Bangalore city.

What the State will do? The government will not give permission to cut trees unless the saplings are planted in the ratio of 2:1 before cutting of trees anywhere in the State.

The State government will immediately issue orders to the authorities concerned to plant saplings (in the ratio of 2:1) wherever the trees have been cut, particularly along the roads and highways in the State. The private individuals, who want to cut trees, will also have to follow this formula.

The High Court also brought to the notice of the government that authorities concerned should commence the work of planting of saplings this week itself because the planting will have to be completed in the next four weeks to take advantage of monsoon season.

## 100 promises, only 10 may take root

BMP's tree transplantation plan to compensate for road widening projects gets sceptical response

ROHITH B & NIBHARAN KAGGARE

The Bharat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BMP) recently announced that a tree transplantation exercise would be undertaken. By this, the Palike hopes to shield itself from the ire of environmentalists, who are in arms against its road widening projects. Under this green initiative, the BMP has decided to transplant around 10 trees - from Palace Road to government lands located nearby.

The BMP on Sunday transplanted a huge tree near Maharaja's College to a spot nearby. However, more than 30 trees were chopped off along Bellary Road (Hebbal Road) without being transplanted elsewhere.

S Shekar, tree officer, BMP told Bangalore Mirror, "The Corporation has identified around 10 trees for Hebbal Road for transplantation." However, the road widening project, on from the CBI offices site, is a 100 feet wide road. The widening project will be along Mysore Bank circle along Palace Road. Stating that 1,000 trees would be axed to allow more road space around the Vidhana Soudha, BMP chief engineer (main roads) Krishna Reddy pronounced that measures would be taken to conserve these trees.

THEAT TO OLD TREES Environmentalists fear that this green drive would damage the tree cover around Vidhana Soudha - the third densest tree canopy after Cubbon Park and Lalbagh. Environmentalist S. Sachin told Bangalore Mirror that tree transplantation would damage old trees, which are very fragile.

According to former IPS Officer S G Nagesh, the tree cover around Vidhana Soudha is famous for its density and variety. "Many rare flowering trees can be found around Vidhana Soudha. Once we are there, they are lost forever. The tree transplantation exercise will not be a complete success as the original foliage may not be retained while transplanting. The BMP will transplant only those trees which it finds convenient, and discard the rest," said Nagesh.

Prashant S, an environmentalist, said that tree like *horge* and *akasha mulgali* on Palace Road and Shekhar Road contributed to keeping the environment cool.

Some of the other tree varieties found there include *strobiliferus*, *ginkgo*, *neem* and *rain tree*.

Keshavan N Chalam, a member of Tree Protection Organisation said, "A few weeks ago, we approached the BMP Commissioner and proposed that the area between trees and the new footpath be converted into service roads for two-wheelers and autos. But, they seem to have forgotten the model."

On whether chopping of old trees around Vidhana Soudha would strip the city of its green sheen, tree officer S. Shekar said that the entire process would be carried out under technical expertise and scientific methods. "Even though the government deplores sapling drives, scant attention is paid to nurture them.

BMP SEES A BRIGHT FUTURE

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## A bitter pill for city motorists

Traffic restrictions may help but the cascading effect will be felt all over the city

SUDHA CHAKRABORTY

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# Hasiru

# Usiru

## A Campaign to Reclaim the City

Constrained by the lackadaisical approach of the various authorities who have ignored public enthusiasm and involvement, and have also prompted continuation of rampant tree-felling and road-widening works, Environment Support Group and Ors filed a Public Interest Litigation in the High Court of Karnataka in May 2008.



CUTTING TREES TO WIDEN ROADS AND BUILDING FLYOVERS TO EASE TRAFFIC FLOW ARE NOT THE ONLY SOLUTION THE GOVERNMENT CAN DO IT BY ADOPTING SOME SMART THINKING. STARTING TODAY, EXPRESS LISTS SOME...

### Simple pills for B'lore's traffic ills

Think you have an idea to solve Bangalore's burgeoning traffic problems? Would you like to be part of the change instead of being a mere spectator? Do you really believe in Bangalore, and not just the hoardings? E-mail us your ideas at [mybangalore@gmail.com](mailto:mybangalore@gmail.com) or [mybangalore@mybangalore.org](mailto:mybangalore@mybangalore.org). We will be happy to look at them. Public responsible.

DECONGESTION PLAN

### Avenue Road widening gets a push

Deaths On Bangalore Roads Double In 7 Years, Says Study

### More vehicles, MORE ACCIDENTS

STATS FOR 2007

Place	Deaths	Serious Injuries	Mild Injuries
India	125,000	25,00,000	62,50,000
Karnataka	8,000	1,80,000	450,000
Bangalore	1,000	20,000	50,000

### Trees make way for roads

Scores of fully grown trees are being translocated to develop two-lane roads into four-lane ones

Onslaught on lung space

### Nearly 50 trees axed

### Only long-term plans can save Bangalore

Environment Day

Bring back the trees. Strengthen public transport. Go for mass rapid transit. On Environment Day today, the road ahead for Bangalore is one that combines tough measures with commitment.

costs India Rs 3,000-4,000 crore a year. And as a CSE report adds, slow-moving vehicles pollute more and waste fuel. In a more recent report, it brings home the fact that we are polluting the atmosphere like never before. Is this the eco-

The petition argued that:

- The road widening programme is completely illegal and blatantly violates the provisions under various Acts (Karnataka Town and Country Planning Act, Karnataka Municipal Corporation Act, Karnataka Tree Preservation Act and so on).
- In spirit, road widening focuses only on the mobility of vehicles and not people. It blatantly disregards the needs of other road users and compromises on the safety of pedestrians, vendors, hawkers, senior citizens, children, differently abled and so on.
- Thousands of livelihoods are going to be destroyed with properties of businesses being taken over for the purpose of widening, as in the case of Infantry Road.
- Approximately 35-40,000 trees are likely to be felled over a stretch of 300 kilometres. This will adversely affect the micro-climate of city by increasing temperatures in densely populated and built areas by as much as 3°C.
- In addition to altering character of the city's landscape permanently, road widening does not adhere to basic principles of urban planning and design and does not follow the standards prescribed in the National Building Code.

# Tree travails: No green guardian in Garden City

### Tree lovers, environmentalists, citizens urge BBMP to set up a tree authority to monitor large-scale tree cutting in the city

**THE** Karnataka Tree Preservation Act, 1976, states that it is mandatory to set up a tree authority. Ironically, Bangalore (supposed to be a green city) does not have a tree authority in place. In the backdrop of a major road widening project which will involve chopping of several trees, environmentalists and tree lovers have demanded the setting up of a tree authority to monitor the loss of trees due to various infrastructure projects in the state.

**MEMBERS**  
The Karnataka Tree Preservation Act 1976 makes it mandatory to set up a tree authority. Members of the tree authority include the city's Mayor, Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner of Forests (Tree Officer), District Horticulture Officer and three non-official members having special knowledge or practical experience in the preservation of trees.

**RECENTLY**  
The Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) is seriously considering setting up the tree authority. The BBMP Tree Officer said, "We are seriously thinking of setting up a tree authority. We have sent a request to the BBMP Commissioner. Subsequently, an actual government order needs to be passed in this regard."

**BBMP PROPOSAL**  
S. Prabhoo, Department Secretary, BBMP, said, "BBMP is a new unit. The BBMP authorities should send a proposal for setting up a tree authority. Only then can we set up the authority."



The Trees Act 1976 makes it mandatory to set up a tree authority. Tree lovers feel such an authority will monitor the indiscriminate felling of trees to make way for infrastructure projects in the city.

**DECENTRALISING POWERS**  
However, activists feel that the solution does not end with the establishment of a Tree Authority. "According to the 74th Amendment to the Constitution, more powers should be vested with the local ward committees with regard to trees in their respective areas. This will increase the citizens' involvement in decision-making," said Leo Saldanha, co-ordinator of Environment Support Group.

**CONSULTATION**  
Respecting to a public interest litigation by Environment Support Group, the Karnataka High Court had ordered the Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike to consult the citizens, a citizens' group, before going ahead with cutting of trees in the city for any infrastructure project.

**PLANT ONE, PLANT TWO**  
The High Court order is being followed. Recently, the PWD Minister H. Revanna has ordered and sanctioned road widening project during a closed-door meeting with the BBMP Tree Officer. This project will involve massive tree felling. Hasim Usman was not consulted at all, said Chamraj. Hasim Usman group members claim that government officials never inform them about tree felling. "As opposed to the High Court order, we are hardly informed and consulted. There is no clear mechanism in place. The decision-making process at present is completely undemocratic."

# No space for trees in India's Garden City

### Every Dept receives 15 applications daily for cutting trees in Bangalore

By Ravi Kumar  
Bangalore, July 17

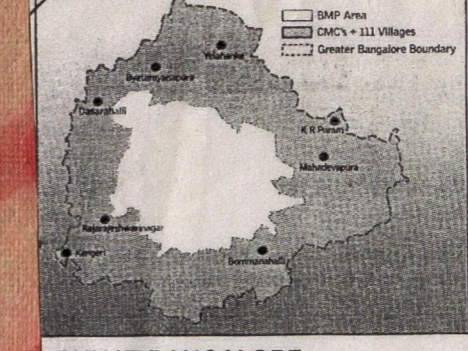
**T**HE world came to know Bangalore first as India's Garden City. But how many of us are aware that the Forest Department today receives at least 15 applications every day, seeking permission to fell 23 trees - on an average.

More than the applications, the reasons specified in them make for interesting reading. Most applicants say the trees wish to cut are 100 old and their roots damage basements, water tanks and compound walls.

Others point out that the trees simply don't fit in - Vastu-wise. Range Forest Officer (Tree Unit) T.M. Jeehan Pasha, who has a collection of books on Vastu in his office library, says, "No Vastu expert has recommended the felling of trees. Rather they recommend that trees be planted in specific directions to ensure ventilation and natural lighting."



One of the many precious trees that make Bangalore India's Garden City. — Express photo



**BRUHAT BANGALORE MAHANAGARA PALIKE**  
Six underpasses proposed at a cost of Rs 131 crore (Nagavara Ring Road, Kadrehanahalli Ring Road, Putteshahalli, Prof. O.N.R. Rao Circle, Basappa Circle, Hendur Banaswadi) START DATE: March 2007 COMMENCEMENT: March 2007

**Development of arterial 70 roads of 155 km at a cost of Rs 130 crore** COMMENCEMENT: March 2007 COMPLETION: June 2007

**Inner Core Ring Road 30 km of elevated road at a Rs 1,800 crore** EXPRESSION OF INTEREST: March 2007 Investment of 7,989 crore under JNNURM (Storm water drain network, environment management, urban renewal, road network, solid waste management, basic services to urban poor)

**Gearing up for Bruhat Bangalore** Administrative blueprint is in place in 5 zones Short-term development plan Infrastructure Survey under way

# VISION 2007

At the Bangalore Today and Tomorrow summit, civic agencies gave a presentation of projects planned for the future. Here's a slice of some schemes in store

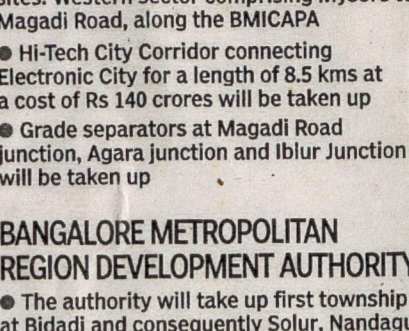


BANGALORE DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

**New land acquisition policy.** Under this policy, some proportion of the land acquired from landowners will be offered to land owners after development.

**BDA plans to distribute about 50,000 sites with 20 per cent area reserved for vertical growth with apartments.** About 2,00,000 houses planned under the unique programme of budget housing for economically weaker sections.

**Eastern sector from Varthur Road to Sarjapura Road to Hosur road of 4,560 acres will cater 1,63,589 housing units and 11,560**



BANGALORE METROPOLITAN REGION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

**The authority will take up first township at Bidadi and consequently Solur, Nandagudi, Sathanur and Ramanganam.** Institutional area, government offices, super speciality hospital, Institute of Rural Management and Global Apparel Village will be located near Ramanganam.

**1000 Volvo buses will be added to the existing fleet of 39 buses in phased manner.** Modernisation of Jayanagar and Yeswanthpur stations and Dornier air conditioning of seven new stations will be taken up this year.

**On-line GPS-GIS based vehicle tracking system on all 4,000 plus buses to be taken up in 2007.** Installation of real time passenger information system at 75 Volvo stops in the city Smartcard based automatic fare collection system on all buses for student passes, public passes and others on card

# Of trees and traffic

### Discouraging use of personal motor vehicles by charging penal fees could reduce congestion



New York Times. According to him daily congestion charge of \$5 for entering the centre of the city is likely to reduce in 2003—led to an immense drop of 70,000 cars a day in the centre. Traffic congestion fell by almost 20% and carbon dioxide emission cut by over 15%. The charge has been increased to \$8 (Rs 661).

**Maintaining that the negative six facts predicted by opponents never materialised, he admitted that this had preconditions.** "In London, as in the case in New York or any other city, an enhanced public transport system was critical." Interestingly, public buses apparently grew rapidly among the highest-paid groups.

**New York's Mayor Michael Bloomberg has until early next year to review the state Legislature and the Council to approve his traffic toll which will charge cars \$8 (Rs 325) trucks \$21 to drive into Manhattan weekdays.** If he gets his way, New York City receive a \$354 million grant from federal government, aimed at eradicating innovative local solutions to solve traffic problems.

**Over the coming months a Commission will examine various ways to deal with traffic congestion, including tolling through hearings, testing and reviews of every aspect of traffic flow, as required by the NUTP.** Civic groups argue that discouraging the use of personal motor vehicles would be more effective in the long run, judging by the experience of several cities across the world. Singapore, Stockholm and London, for example, have introduced disincentives in the form of congestion pricing.

**Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London, claimed success for his city's decongestion initiatives in a recent article in The**

# Trees still being cut in city

because of the nuisance factor. Or because trees have fallen because of a storm. Some report illegal tree felling. The ESG provides legal advice and support in case of unauthorised tree felling. "We are going to public land, like road-sides, for private property. The ESG has taken some photographs of trees being illegally cut. For example, in BTM Circle, BDA contractors were cutting trees to facilitate flyover construction. "They stopped after we took action, but a week later, the trees were gone."

**DEEPASHREE OFFERS** tips to those wanting to prevent tree felling. "Check the permission letter and understand why the tree is being cut. Note the type of tree and the state of its health. Everyone has to obtain the DFO's permission before cutting."

**TO BE FELLED:** The trees on Palace Road, in Bangalore which were auctioned on Tuesday. — PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

# Auctioning trees to widen roads

**BANGALORE:** After the high profile auction of government lands across Bangalore urban district, it is now the turn of the grant old trees on two key roads in the city to go under the hammer.

**On Monday, 66 stately trees** on Race Course Road and Palace Road were auctioned for a sum of Rs. 1.9 lakh and Rs. 2.49 including taxes.

**Krishna Udappudi, Deputy Chief Conservator of forests, Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) told The Hindu.** These trees are set to be felled, for widening the two roads for the smooth flow of traffic.

**To cut down on costs and use of personnel, the BBMP auctioned standing trees.** Those who won the bids will have to bear the expenses of cutting and transporting the trees.

**The same method was adopted for the auction of trees** that were cut for the Malleswaram underpass. Mr. Udappudi said, "We divided the 66 trees into eight lots, which means that the bidder will have to buy the entire lot. The net with three mahogany trees let the maximum of Rs. 70,000," said Mr. Udappudi. Further, he explained that the value of the tree depends on the species, girth and height of the tree.

**While planning a tree, a crucial factor** is its proximity to buildings, walls, driveways, streets, utility lines, head and buried, and septic systems as spread out both above and below ground.

**Not to plant tree saplings close to foundation, concrete and asphalt structures or drains.** The most common mistake when plant a tree is a digging hole, which is both too deep and too narrow. As a general rule, it should be transplanted no deeper than soil in which they were originally grown. The width of the hole should be at least 1 times the diameter of the root ball or tuber.

**Newly planted trees should be watered** the time of planting. In addition, during first growing season, they should be watered at least once a week in the absence of more often during the height of the sun. However, care should be taken not to over water as this may result in oxygen deprivation.

**What trees do**  
That trees play an important role in the urban landscape by enhancing the aesthetic value is widely accepted. But the main aspect of urban forestry is energy conservation and carbon dioxide absorption to reduce pollution.

**Each healthy tree can reduce air borne dust particles by as much as 7,600 particles per litre of air.** About 300 full-sized trees can absorb the deadly carbon dioxide produced by a typical car driven 19,200 kms a year.

**They modify humidity in air and act as noise buffers.** Leaves and branches slow down the movement of rain to the ground, allowing it to soak in slowly. Without trees, heavy rains can create mud soil.

**Trees help cool down overall city environment** by shading asphalt, concrete and metal surfaces. Buildings and paving in City centres create a heat-island effect. A mature tree canopy reduces air temperatures by about 5-10 degree centigrade.

**Trees are natural air coolers.** Through evapotranspiration (water evaporated and transpired by plants as part of their metabolic process), trees add moisture and cool the air.

# Of trees and traffic

### Discouraging use of personal motor vehicles by charging penal fees could reduce congestion

**When in doubt cut the trees.** The recent decision of the Karnataka government to widen a number of roads in Bangalore to improve traffic flow in the centre of the city is likely to involve the clear-felling of hundreds of full-grown avenue trees that have contributed to Bangalore's erstwhile, enviable reputation as a Garden City.

**Traffic congestion is certainly among the most visible and vexing problems created by the accelerated, unplanned growth of the city over the past decade and a half.** It is also a great leveler, affecting everyone from the privileged to a chauffeur-driven luxury car, to a rickshaw puller, to a commuter on a two-wheeler or in a bus, to the lowly cyclist and endangered pedestrian tracing a perilous path through the urban jungle.

**The question is whether a simplistic, destructive "off-with-the-trees" policy is the answer.** A memorandum recently submitted to the authorities by a coalition of environmentalists and civic activists suggests that it is not. According to them, it represents a unidimensional, knee-jerk response that bypasses the urgent need for an integrated urban transport policy and strategy.

**They point out that the government has sidestepped several measures designed to bring some order into the current chaos.** For example, there is no sign of the Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority (UMTA) prescribed for all cities.

**Two trees were chopped off this morning on Vanil Vilas Road at Labbagh West Gate circle, ironically just outside the famed botanical garden.** According to witnesses, a group of five people arrived at the spot at 10:30 am and cut down two Gulmohar (Kuhilus) trees. When some residents enquired about the permission granted to cut the trees, the contractor produced a letter dated January 22, 2003.

**This letter, issued by the Forest Department to the Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BMP), permits them to cut 141 types of trees at Majestic Circle (Subhashnagar), Queen's Circle, Minerva Circle and surrounding areas.** "But the validity of the order holds true only for 60 days after the date of approval," said Mr. R. Madhusudan of 'The Tree Protector', a city-based NGO.

**Following the high court directive, several concerned groups and individuals have formed associations to check illegal felling.** That keeps us on our toes, tree unit officer Jalani Pasha points out.

**Last year, the forest department had granted permission for axing 1,800 trees.** Officials admit that the previous undertaking that two to four trees have to be planted for every felled tree and an insurance amount of up to Rs 10,000 paid, was never conformed to. The new High Court ruling can cost violators dear, as the penalty under the Tree Protection Act is imprisonment up to two years and/or a fine up to Rs 5,000, besides paying up double or more the value of the felled tree.

**On Thursday, a 'champak' tree was chopped next to a temple on 10th Cross, Malleswaram, citing reasons of public inconvenience.** A case has been booked against the engineering division of the BCC, Malleswaram. The other three cases of tree felling against individuals include 300 Bombax ciba (boorge) at Jadarashini Layout, M.S. Ramaiah Na-

# Trees losing out to development in city

### Aravind Gowda expresses concern at the loss of trees in the city-to accommodate the infrastructure projects

**Identifying of roads, beautification of traffic junctions, construction of flyovers, residential layout formation, streamlining of traffic signals, these development-related activities are finally in full swing in the IT Capital of the nation - Bangalore.**

**While they are a welcome relief from the chaos on the streets, they have taken a toll on a common victim - the tree this city has been known so well for all these years.** The adage 'industrialise or perish' has rather turned into 'industrialise and perish' for Bangalore's trees. For, development is happening at the cost of trees here.

**Countless roadside trees have made way for the Town Hall, Sirsi Circle Flyover, Richmond Circle Flyover, Mohkri Circle grade separator, widening of Bellary Road and traffic interchange at Airport Road-Intermediate Ring Road Junction.** Thousands of more trees are ready to face the axe with a plethora of development projects like the Metro Rail and 10 flyovers scheduled for implementation in Bangalore. The City has witnessed substantial loss of green cover over the years. While infrastructure development is the primary reason, other like crude methods for maintenance of utilities too are responsible for the slow death of trees.

**In a quick approach, the government has decided to make it mandatory for every new house coming up in urban centres in the state to have adequate space for two trees.** It is being made compulsory by amending the Karnataka Municipal Corporation Act, 1979. Once the amendment comes into force, separate space for two trees has to be earmarked. Unless, the building plan specifies space for trees, it will not be approved.

**This rule will become part of the urban building bylaws.** The draft of the by-laws have already been prepared and are awaiting notification. It means that any new house under construction in BCC or Bangalore Development Authority limits (BDA) must have space for two trees once the rule is implemented.

**If this is a slow process, trees in Bangalore are now facing a new kind of threat from the optical fibre cable (OFC) laying companies.** Footpath and roadside space are being dug up in a haphazard manner by lay OFCs to provide communication services. The Bangalore City Corporation made an assessment of the trenching methods adopted by OFC laying companies and pointed out the damage caused to trees that are spread under roads and footpaths. Considering the fact that a single service provider has laid cables for 200 kms across the City till now, the extent of damage to tree roots is unimaginable. And each service provider intends to lay OFC for less than 3,000 kms in the next three years.

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# Tree obstructing vehicular traffic

### One Special Correspondent

**BANGALORE, SEPT. 2** Even ardent tree lovers may not want this. A racecourse is locking most of 7th A main road in SBI Colony in Koramangala. Only two-wheelers can pass through the road as the branches are barely feet above the road at one end. Mr. Ram Murthi, General Secretary, Koramangala Residents' Civic Group (KRCG), told The Hindu on Tuesday that the residents needed the permission of the Horticulture Department of the B&P for cutting the tree. The B&P itself had to get approval from the Forest Department. In his case, because overhead power-lines passed close to the tree, the KRCG also had to be involved.

**"Officials from the three agencies do not visit the area at the same time and we are still left with this tree,"** Mr. Ram Murthi said. Scores of other trees were felled in Koramangala on a Maruthi van during the Vaastu and more parking space last week, had its roots weakened by continuous digging around it by utility agencies, they added.

# Axe-happy agencies fell trees

**By Pawan Poonacha**  
Trees News Network

**Bangalore:** The horticulture department and the Bangalore City Corporation couldn't care less about the felling of trees. Right and centre, bringing down huge healthy trees across Bangalore.

**This, despite the deputy conservator of forests (urban) issuing a notification a fortnight ago, withdrawing all orders of tree felling in the city.** Ever since, the forest department has booked seven cases of illegal tree felling, four of them against the BCC and horticulture department.

**These civic agencies departments are unmoved even by the High Court recent passing strictures and issuing a directive that no trees be planted prior to the felling of any tree, besides detailing guidelines on felling.** Merely two days after the notification, the horticulture department had chopped a almohar tree near Labbagh West Gate. A rain tree was felled near Nandi theatre, Jayanagar. Another puluhar tree was chopped near Krishna Park, Basavanagudi. According to forest officials, the trees were felled following direc-



A tree blocking a road at the SBI Colony in Koramangala, Bangalore.

# Two trees axed near Labbagh

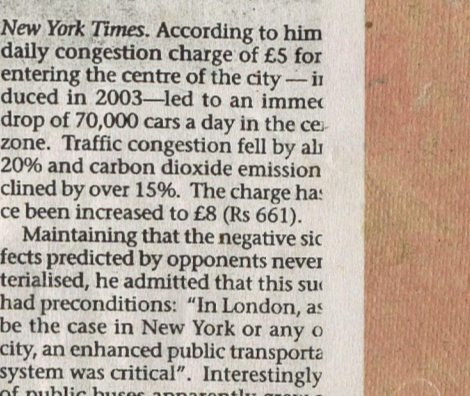
**BANGALORE, Aug 2**  
Two trees were chopped off this morning on Vanil Vilas Road at Labbagh West Gate circle, ironically just outside the famed botanical garden.

**According to witnesses, a group of five people arrived at the spot at 10:30 am and cut down two Gulmohar (Kuhilus) trees.** When some residents enquired about the permission granted to cut the trees, the contractor produced a letter dated January 22, 2003.

**This letter, issued by the Forest Department to the Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BMP), permits them to cut 141 types of trees at Majestic Circle (Subhashnagar), Queen's Circle, Minerva Circle and surrounding areas.** "But the validity of the order holds true only for 60 days after the date of approval," said Mr. R. Madhusudan of 'The Tree Protector', a city-based NGO.

**Following the high court directive, several concerned groups and individuals have formed associations to check illegal felling.** That keeps us on our toes, tree unit officer Jalani Pasha points out.

**Last year, the forest department had granted permission for axing 1,800 trees.** Officials admit that the previous undertaking that two to four trees have to be planted for every felled tree and an insurance amount of up to Rs 10,000 paid, was never conformed to. The new High Court ruling can cost violators dear, as the penalty under the Tree Protection Act is imprisonment up to two years and/or a fine up to Rs 5,000, besides paying up double or more the value of the felled tree.



One of the two trees chopped on Vanil Vilas Road in Bangalore on Saturday.

**Nagappa Atturkar, who touched for the 60-day rule, however, reasoned that BMP Commissioner M. S. Srinivas Murthy ordered the officials to cut down all the trees that were "objections on the road" in order to widen the road.** On the Vanil Vilas Road, where these two trees stood, there was always movement of traffic. There is enough space available for parking on both the sides of the road. Residents of the area are furious that the trees were chopped. "Why don't the authorities ask the residents whether the road needs broadening?" asked Dr. Zash Hoskote, a paediatrician who has his clinic just across the street.

**Other residents claimed that this road has never had any traffic jam or parking problems.** "These trees are like old monuments," added Dr. Hoskote. The trees that were cut down were around 25-30 years old. When Deccan Herald asked Mr. Atturkar, as to what parameters were considered while granting permission to cut trees to widen the road, he said that the trees had terms and were spoilt.

**But Mr. Madhusudan who was present at the spot said, "At times flowering trees have a hollow or a pith. The trees that were chopped were still strong."**