

Delhi Forest Department Informs Supreme Court of "Fake Permission" for Ridge Tree Felling



In a significant development, the Delhi Forest Department has informed the Supreme Court that a "fake permission" was issued for the felling of trees in the ecologically sensitive Ridge area of Vasant Kunj. This startling revelation, contained in a counter-affidavit filed on July 10, 2025, by the Deputy Conservator of Forests/Tree Officer (West Division), comes in response to a plea alleging contempt of court proceedings against authorities for land leveling and tree cutting related to a housing project.

The land in question falls within a "morphological ridge," a zone protected by a Supreme Court order issued on May 9, 1996, which mandates prior court permission for any diversion or tree-felling activity. Environmental activist Bhavreen Kandhari, through advocate Manan Verma, filed the plea, contending that "no permission has been sought from this honorable court before undertaking the said contemptuous activities." The petition also alleged that officials from the Forest Department, the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD), and the Ridge Management Board failed to prevent or stop the illegal activities.

The Forest Department's affidavit stated that it had come to their attention that a "fake permission" for tree felling was issued in the name of the office of the Deputy Conservator of Forests/Tree Officer West Forest Division, with the document allegedly issued to a plot owner identified as Rakesh Kumar Sharma. The affidavit further detailed that the West Division official had written to the Station House Officer (SHO) of Vasant Kunj police station on December 13, 2024, requesting an FIR (First Information Report) under relevant sections of law regarding the alleged forgery.

However, the police's response, received on February 17, indicated that the alleged forged permission was illegible and the disputed location could not be found. Furthermore, during questioning, the plot owner, Rakesh Kumar Sharma, "refused the allegation regarding forged permission for felling/damaging of trees." Police requested the original copy of the forged permission to proceed; otherwise, the complaint would be closed. The Forest Department clarified in a subsequent letter on March 13, 2025, that the copy provided was the only one available in their office.

The petitioner also highlighted that construction activities for residential buildings had proceeded on the disputed land and that the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) had sanctioned the building plans, despite the Supreme Court's standing order.

The Supreme Court had previously issued a show-cause notice on May 7, questioning why contempt proceedings should not be initiated for the alleged violation of its 1996 order. The matter is scheduled to be heard next on July 21 by a bench led by Justice Surya Kant. This ongoing legal battle underscores the critical importance of protecting Delhi's Ridge area, a vital green lung for the capital, and the rigorous enforcement of environmental regulations.