

News

The Supreme Court calls Haryana officials "pathetic" for felling forty trees in order to widen the road leading to the BJP office.



The Court will call all relevant authorities and said that the tree-cutting was "a ruthless act" carried out under the guise of road widening for political convenience.

In the case of Col. Davinder Singh Rajput vs. State Of Haryana And Ors., the Supreme Court harshly criticized Haryana authorities on Wednesday for felling forty fully grown trees in order to improve a road that was purportedly heading to a local Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

district office.

Justices JB Pardiwala and KV Viswanathan's bench expressed dismay at the authorities' decision to take down trees solely for political reasons.

Initially, the Haryana Shehri Vikas Parishad (HSVP) was represented by Additional Solicitor General Vikramjeet Banerjee, who asked for time to submit an affidavit outlining the authority's stance.

Justice Pardiwala questioned the necessity of the measure right away.

He harshly questioned whether the State had authorization to cut down the trees and why.

Banerjee acknowledged that forty trees had been chopped down, but he insisted that this was done to reduce traffic.

Pardiwala, the judge, was not persuaded. He questioned the rationale behind the choice and the intended use of the recently constructed road.

Justice Pardiwala said that the authorities' acts showed a total disdain for the environment after the petitioner lawyer told the bench that the road led directly to the BJP district office.

The judge described the action as "ruthless" and "pathetic," finding it astonishing that officials would demolish a green belt in order to get access to a political office.

"You killed people ruthlessly because you wanted access to the office? How pitiful! This office may have been placed somewhere else. We discuss the green belt and the environment. According to Justice Pardiwala.

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The Supreme Court

When Banerjee said the State would ***"compensate"*** for the felling, the Court responded sharply that no compensation could restore the loss of mature trees.

By recompense, what do you mean? Who will you make up for taking a tree's life? We will

take this very seriously. You could not have chopped off forty full-grown trees to widen the road so it could lead to that office,” **Justice Pardiwala said.**

Banerjee argued that the action was taken under pressure from local residents due to congestion. But the Court was not persuaded.

“Accha? Should we ask those local residents?” Justice Pardiwala asked pointedly.

Meanwhile, the petitioner's counsel alleged that the construction/ road widening itself was beyond the jurisdiction of HSVP.

The counsel said the road was a “link road” between the sector road and the National Highway, which fell under the purview of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and not the local authority.

He submitted that HSVP had no authority to undertake the construction.

When asked about the current status, the counsel informed the bench that the construction was complete, and that his client's residence had now become a “T-point” for the traffic emerging from the new road. He urged the Court to restore the green belt and halt traffic on that route.

Justice Pardiwala asked how such traffic could be stopped, to which the counsel said it could be blocked temporarily.

Justice Viswanathan then noted that the road was presently a sanctioned one but agreed that the Court would need to examine the permissions and jurisdiction issues before taking further steps.

“As things stand, it is a sanctioned road. Still, we will look into the permissions and other things. We can't pass anything at this stage,” Justice Viswanathan said

The bench then dictated its order, making clear that it found the incident deeply disturbing.

“We have taken this matter very seriously. Something shocking could be said to have been done by the authorities. These authorities are responsible for felling of 40 full-grown trees on the pretext of widening the road,” the Court recorded.

It directed HSVP to file an affidavit within two weeks explaining the circumstances in which the trees were felled and the purpose for which the road widening was undertaken.

When the State counsel asked whether the State and other respondents also needed to file a response, Justice Pardiwala responded firmly that every authority involved would be held accountable.

“Yes. As early as possible. We are going to take each one of you to task. Take it from us. Two weeks. All authorities will be here before us. We are going to put them questions. One after the other. Take it from us. We are going to take up this issue very seriously. Very seriously,” Justice Pardiwala said.

He added that filing affidavits alone would not suffice and said that felling of trees “for a purpose which is not convincing” could not be justified.