

## HC gives 4 weeks for action plan on preserving forests

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As much as 50 per cent of the notified forest area in Delhi has been encroached upon, even as the Capital is gradually losing its green cover in the absence of an action plan to preserve forests, falling in the protected category, in a time-bound manner.

When the Delhi High Court was informed about this, a Division Bench on Wednesday directed the Delhi government to formulate an action plan after convening a meeting of all agencies concerned and submit a comprehensive action plan within four weeks.

The Forest Department admitted there were encroachments in all notified forest areas, being maintained by different authorities such as Delhi Development Authority and the Army. According to the Economic Survey of Delhi 2014-15, about 180 sq km of land in Delhi falls under the forest cover, which is about 12.12 per cent of the Capital's geographical area.

The Bench, comprising Justice B.D. Ahmed and Justice Sanjeev Sachdeva, said this was an alarming situation that needed to be addressed. It directed that the action

plan should indicate how the forest areas encroached upon could be restored as before.

The issues of dwindling forest cover and increasing air pollution in Delhi was taken up through a Public Interest Litigation initiated by the high court. The Bench also directed the Engineers-in-Chief of the three Municipal Corporations, New Delhi Municipal Council, Public Works Department and Cantonment Board to immediately survey the roads under their respective jurisdiction and take steps for removal of debris from the roadside.

The matter will come up for further hearing on October 14. Amicus curiae Kailash Vasudev said that the government should be asked to demarcate the forest areas, remove encroachments and hand them over to the Forest Department.

50 per cent of notified forest area in Delhi under encroachment

**Source:**

**<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/hc-gives-4-weeks-for-action-plan-on-preserving-forests/article7635074.ece>**

