

Not park, city needs 'proper dense' forest, high court tells DDA

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New Delhi: Taking a dim view of Delhi Development Authority's proposal to develop an "ornamental park" instead of a dense forest on a plot of land, Delhi High Court has stressed that the authority must focus on creating a forest in the city

Justice Jasmeet Singh, who had earlier asked the DDA to state the details of an over 55-acre land proposed to be earmarked for the development of a forest, said on Friday that "every inch" of the plot should be a "proper dense forest" as it will act as "lungs" for the city.

"It is for the lungs of Delhi. It is only to reduce pollution levels in Delhi ... Delhi needs a forest. Delhi does not need an ornamental park. Delhi does not need a medicinal garden, clustered bamboo forest," Justice Singh pointed out to the DDA's lawyer.

However, the DDA's counsel assured the court that the plan is not to develop an "ornamental" park but for an urban forest with three zones, including a 19-acre area with dense flora and a "buffer" zone.

The court asked the authority to consider if the entire plot can be developed as a dense forest, observing that the total area is "too small" for the authority's proposed usage of carving out a core zone and a buffer zone or a periphery.

Justice Singh said there is a difference between a "park having some trees" and a forest and re-iterated that the entire 55 acres should be developed as a "core area."

"This is not acceptable. I am of the view that the need of the people of Delhi is a forest and not an ornamental park," the court said, listing the matter for further proceedings on May 17. It also asked the DDA to consider

finding other "larger" patches of land to develop a forest.

"We don't need a herbal forest. People of Delhi will give you blessings. Go find some land which is lying vacant," the court said. On April 1, while dealing with a contempt case against the DDA over cutting down of several trees in the southern Ridge area, the court had asked the authority to file an affidavit with respect to its proposal to develop a forest and said the land should be "sustainable" for the creation of a forest.

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