

BEFORE THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL SOUTH ZONE AT CHENNAI
MEMORANDUM OF APPLICATION
(Under Sections 14, 15 , 25 and 26 read with 18(1) of the National Green
Tribunal Act, 2010)
M.A.No: 6 of 2022
&
M.A. 2 of 2023
in
Application No. 239 of 2021

Navroz Kersasp Mody & Anr

... Applicants

Vs

The Auroville Foundation & Ors

... Respondents

INDEX

S.No.	Description	Page No.
1.	Memo dated 04.08.2023	1
2.	Email dated 02.08.2023 to the 1 st Respondent along with reports	3
3.	Report on clearing at revelation forest sanctuary on 10,12 June, 2023	6
4.	Email dated 27.07.2023 to CCF Villupuram	11
5.	Email dated 26.07.2023 to 1 st Respondent on tree cutting and excavation on the Crown Road with report	13
6.	Letter dated 08.07.2023 to the Land Board	38
7.	Email dated 07.07.2023 to the 1 st Respondent along with report on trees cut north of Gaya crossing etc.	40
8.	Letter dated 01.07.2023 to CPWD	58
9.	Report dated 19.03.2023 on tree removal on Crown Road	59
10.	Tree damage report dated 29.05.2023	84
11	Photograph of Banyans cut - Sante	96

Through
A.Yogeshwaran
Counsel for the Applicant

BEFORE THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL SOUTH ZONE AT CHENNAI
MEMORANDUM OF APPLICATION
(Under Sections 14, 15 , 25 and 26 read with 18(1) of the National Green
Tribunal Act, 2010)
M.A.No: 6 of 2022
&
M.A. 2 of 2023
in
Application No. 239 of 2021

Navroz Kersasp Mody & Anr ... Applicants

Vs

The Auroville Foundation & Ors ... Respondents

MEMO DATED 4.08.2023 FILED BY THE APPLICANTS

The applicants respectfully submit as follows :

1. That rampant tree felling and clearing of wooded areas has continued despite the judgment of this Hon'ble Tribunal dated 28.04.2022 and the statements made before this Hon'ble Tribunal in the present miscellaneous applications on 14.03.2023.
2. That the following letters have been addressed to the authorities concerning the ongoing illegal tree felling outside the area of the crown road and outside the Darkali area of the crown road, which alone has been inspected by the committee constituted by this Hon'ble Tribunal.
 - a. **02 08 2023** – Emails were sent to the Secretary and the members of the land board once again with reports on the illegal tree felling in the Revelation forest sanctuary, trees cleared on the crown road trajectory and trees damaged / cut in the excavation process. About 1864 trees were cleared in Revelation forest ranging from 3 to 15 years.
 - b. **27 07 2023 – Letter to Mr. A. S. Marimuthu I.F.S Chief Conservator of Forests Villupuram was sent.** This letter details the illegalities in the tree felling in the Darkali area, where more trees than permitted have been felled, trees outside the 9.1 meter wide path were cut etc.
 - c. **26 07 2023 – Letter to Dr Ravi – secretary of the AVFO** – along with report on trees damaged during excavation etc.

- d. **08 07 2023 – Open Letter to Auroville Land Board members** regarding Intimation from the Office of the secretary of the Auroville Foundation to let trees be cut on land stewarded by Mr A. Vohra. It is not in the purview of the AVFO or Mr. A. Vohra to permit the cutting of trees which is in contravention with the NGT judgement. Serious violation of the judgement by the Land Board to be engaged in cutting of trees near Gaia Crossing.
- e. **07 07 2023 – Letter to Dr Ravi – secretary of the AVFO** - Report dt. 2023 07 06 Tree cutting on Crown trajectory was submitted along with a letter regarding the failure to ensure that trees are only cut in accordance with the judgment.
3. In fact, since March, several reports and letters have been addressed to the authorities to cease tree felling and projects in violation of the judgment of this Hon'ble Tribunal, but the 1st respondent has proceeded to violate the orders of this Hon'ble Tribunal with impunity. In fact, on the 28th of July, the 1st respondent's officers cut two huge banyan trees opposite the area called Sante. They claimed that the trees were being pruned. Photographs are attached.
4. It is submitted that rampant destruction of Auroville's green spaces is ongoing – despite the orders of this Hon'ble Tribunal. The respondents have failed to see that except the Crown road other projects like the outer ring road or huge constructions which are ostensibly part of the master plan documents, have to be executed only after obtaining environmental clearance as directed by this Hon'ble Tribunal. The judgment of the Hon'ble Tribunal is being frustrated and Auroville's green spaces are being irreparably destroyed.
5. It is submitted that trees represent time. Native TEDF trees in Auroville are slow growing and hence it is all the more important to protect young trees that are 10 or 15 years old, without brushing it aside because they are not wide majestic trees – given the chance to grow, these trees would have matured into large, majestic trees.
6. It is necessary that the respondent be directed to cease all activity and comply with the judgment of this Hon'ble Tribunal.

Dated this the 4th day of August, 2023 at Chennai



Counsel for the Applicants



Lavenir dAuroville <l.avenir.d.auroville.ra@gmail.com>

if we – Auroville – want to truly be the City the Earth needs

Lavenir dAuroville <l.avenir.d.auroville.ra@gmail.com>

2 August 2023 at 22:05

To: Secretary AV Foundation <secretaryavf@auroville.org.in>, avfoundation@auroville.org.in, landboard@auroville.org.in, landboardoffice@auroville.org.in, satyakam@auroville.org.in, venkat-lb@auroville.org.in, jayanti.ravi@gmail.com, Jayanti Ravi <jayantiravi@auroville.org.in>, <ainnraja@auroville.org.in>

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **TDC Town Development Council** <tdc@auroville.services>

Date: Wed, 2 Aug 2023 at 22:04

Subject: if we – Auroville – want to truly be the City the Earth needs

To: Secretary AV Foundation <secretaryavf@auroville.org.in>, <avfoundation@auroville.org.in>, <landboard@auroville.org.in>, <landboardoffice@auroville.org.in>, <satyakam@auroville.org.in>, <venkat-lb@auroville.org.in>, <jayanti.ravi@gmail.com>, Jayanti Ravi <jayantiravi@auroville.org.in>, <ainnraja@auroville.org.in>

Cc: Tmt Supriya Sahu, I.A.S., <forsec@tn.gov.in>, Shri Hemanth Kumar, IFS <ro.moefccc@gov.in>, Thiru Siva. V. Meyyanathan <minister_eccywsd@tn.gov.in>, Working Committee <workingcom@auroville.services>, AV Council <avcouncil@auroville.services>

Auroville, 2nd August 2023

TDC 23.044

Subject: if we – Auroville – want to truly be the City the Earth needs**Report on Tree cutting in Revelation Forest Sanctuary**

To the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation Office and Auroville Land Board members

In an age where climate change is tangible and visible all over the planet, scientists agree that the reduction of CO2 emissions and the preservation of nature and forests is of paramount importance in the fight to help tackle the adverse consequences that human-induced climate change has on the planet. It is already leading to increased human suffering and loss of biodiversity every day.

Here in Auroville, we have managed to re-green the area over the last 55 years. This was started by the early Aurovilians by protecting the land, ensuring the storm water was retained on the lands and no longer washed away the sparse topsoil, enabling the soil to regenerate. At first, pioneer species were planted, which were able to grow in the harsh conditions. This offered shade slowly produced the fertile soil for the reintroduction of the native and ancient trees that had formed an almost unique forest system in the areas of coastal Tamil Nadu, before these were reduced to small pockets of sacred groves only found around ancient temples.

These efforts have become an example all over India and worldwide; Auroville is engaged in many programmes to further the knowledge that has been gained over the last 55 years. Our forests have become a beacon and an example, and are internationally renowned for the positive effect they have had on the biodiversity and microclimate in the area. The forests and sanctuaries of Auroville are young and are therefore only just starting to regenerate themselves (in the last 20 years). Most of the evergreen – TDEF – and other native trees only reach maturity after 50 to 100 years or more. Special attention to these facts is required while planning the city.

While we understand that there are areas that are planned for the development of roads, buildings and infrastructure, development must happen in an environmentally conscious manner. Trees in the built environment and urban forests are needed to combat the urban heat island effect that would otherwise be created by buildings and roads in built-up areas. Auroville should be designed to be resilient to the impacts of climate change, extreme weather events such as changes in precipitation patterns and rising temperatures. This can be done by using climate-resilient building materials, ensuring the blue-green infrastructure has the capacity to adapt to extreme conditions, and maximising green cover in and around the city.

In this age where the planet is on the verge of going into an unprecedented climate crisis, all planning must be based on the highest levels of environmental sustainability and climate resilience, if we – Auroville – want to truly be the City the Earth needs. Therefore, among many other issues on the level of carbon footprint and water management and security, cutting a massive number of trees (see reports attached) without detailed environmental impact assessments and prior holistic planning cannot be in the interest of Auroville (and its neighbours) as envisioned by the Mother, or in the light of aiming to build a city whose purpose it is to further human consciousness.

We must all strive to act with the highest principles in all that we do, and surely cannot exclude the utmost care for nature and the planet in the construction of Auroville.

attached:

31 07 2023 clearing work at Revelation forest

2023 07 24 report - excavation and trees cut

2023 07 07 report - trees cut on crown trajectory

in Service

L'avenir d'Auroville - TDC Town Development Council

Anan Skoles, Divya Lieser, Dorle Heller, Island Lescure, Lata Iyer, Natasha Storey, Tom Gablier

CC:

To the Honorable Thiru Siva. V. Meyyanathan, *Minister to Government, Department of Environment and Climate Change, Government of Tamil Nadu.*

Ms. Supriya Sahu I.A.S., *Additional Chief Secretary to Government, Department of Environment, Climate Change and Forests, Government of Tamil Nadu.*

Thiru. Deepak S. Bilgi I.F.S., *Director, Department of Environment and Climate Change, Government of Tamil Nadu.* Ministry of Environment GOI

Shri Hemanth Kumar, IFS, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, TN

Auroville Council

Working Committee of the RA

4 attachments



2023 08 02 - if we – Auroville – want to truly be the City the Earth needs.pdf
521K



2023 07 07 report - trees cut on crown trajectory.pdf
1752K



2023 07 31 Report - clearing work at Revelation Forest sanctuary.pdf
1743K



2023 07 24 report - excavation and trees cut.pdf
8360K

Auroville, 31st July 2023

Report of clearing work at Revelation Forest sanctuary on 10th and 12th June 2023



On 10th June 2023, workers from the Auroville Land Board (LB) came to Revelation and started cutting trees and undergrowth inside the Revelation Forest Sanctuary. According to them, this was done in order to locate the border marker stones, from where the trajectory of the Outer Ring could be measured and marked out. They returned on the 12th of June to continue the work.

The Land Board supervisor was asked to stop the work, as it is outside the Crown and therefore any development or clearing of trees goes against the NGT judgement given on the 28th April 2022. The work was stopped, and Land Board members came onsite. The above was very clearly explained to the LB members and supervisor.

Additionally, it was explained that apart from being a violation of the NGT judgement, clearing any areas for development also went against ratified Auroville community processes such as the "Pause" RAD of January 2022, in which the community agreed to pause all clearing, infrastructure laying and permanent construction work on the Right of Ways of Crown, Radials and Outer Ring in order to enable the community to define a way forward for Auroville's development, following: collective processes, the 'Master Plan: Perspective 2025' framework, and other relevant regulations. The outcome shall be approved through a ratified Residents' Assembly

Decision-making process, before the above specified clearing, infrastructure laying and permanent construction work resumes.

Also, according to the 2025 Perspective Plan, the Outer Ring is only a proposal and therefore before any work can be executed, proper plans need to be prepared in consultation with the Auroville community. The LB members understood the situation and agreed that the work should not continue.

Unfortunately, during all the clearing work, a massive number (**1,864 trees**) of trees and undergrowth were cut (see list below), ranging from 3 to 15 year-old trees.

<u>Clearing of Rare Evergreen Trees at Revelation Forest on - 12 June 2023 on the orders of ATDC by Land Board</u>	
Name	Number
1)Diospyros ebenum (ebony)	73
2)diospyros ferrea. (ebony)	198
3)Memecylon umbellatum	164
4)Ixora arborea	126
5)Dimorphocalix glabellus (rare)	23
6)Ochna obtusata	189
7)Tricalysia apiocarpa (rare)	98
8)Psydrax diccocos	14
9)Walsura trifoliata	139
10) Aglaia eleagnoidea	123
11) Mimusops elengi	24
12) Murraya paniculata	117
13) Pleiospermum alatum	58
14) Garcinia spicata (rare)	6
15) Randia malabarica	122
16)Tarenna asiatica	21
17) Suregada angustifolia (rare)	23
18) Santalum album. (Sandalwood)	17
19) Carmona retusa - Kurvinchi	65
20) pleurostyliia opposita (rare)	16
21) Atalantia monophylla	61
Glycosmis	187
Total	1864
Remarks - The trees were young - Between 3 years to 15 years Old. Most of these are rare evergreen species which grow very slowly (take around 200 years to mature). Thus they were all in girth ranging from 0.5 cm to 5 cm and heights ranging from 1 feet to 5 ft tall.	

Given the slow growth and maturation time of these evergreen trees, this has a huge impact, which unfortunately cannot easily be quantified, to biodiversity loss and a young, yet functional, ecosystem (regenerating by itself and attracting new wildlife).



Map showing the distance from border marker stones to the proposed ORR trajectory





Cut trees, some of which would have been 15 years old



Area unnecessarily cleared of trees and vegetation



Land Board workers clearing trees and undergrowth



Auroville, 27th July 2023

TDC 23.044

Subject: Irregularities re trees cut at Darkali, Auroville

Dear Thiru A. S. Marimuthu, I.F.S. Chief Conservator of Forest Villupuram,

In August 2022, the Joint Committee (JC) appointed by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) gave the recommendation to reduce the width of the corridor to be cleared for the Crown project passing through the park of Darkali to 9.1m instead of the original 16.7m, thus saving many trees. The NGT also ordered that no cutting of trees should happen apart from the Crown area until the Joint Committee had evaluated and submitted a report for the remaining designated area.

The reduced width for the Crown corridor of 9.1m was not staked out and marked on the ground to mark the trajectory or the corridor in which trees were to be cut.

On 11th March 2023, 203 trees were cut in Darkali for the Crown project of Auroville. This work was conducted by hired workers supervised by members of the GB-ATDC (appointed by the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation Office (AVFO)) and Mr. Antim Singhi. No work order issued by any appropriate official authority for the cutting of trees was shown onsite.

Of the 203 trees that were cut, many mature trees were located outside the 9.1m-wide corridor, and were therefore unnecessarily felled (see report 2023 04 03 - Report -Darkali water catchments - non-compliance NGT ruling attached).

According to the JC report, a total of 14 red sanders (*Pterocarpus santalinus*) were to be cut. Instead 19 red sanders were cut, 5 of which were beyond the 9.1m corridor. Nine of them were between 20 and 25 years old, the largest tree having a girth of 53 cm (~17 cm diameter). No proof of prior permission to cut red sanders was produced onsite.

There is no record of a stock register for the cut wood maintained by the GB-ATDC (who were supervising the work), according to which a tender or auction of the wood could be initiated. Instead, it was confirmed that the contract to remove the wood was granted to Mr. Elumalai Hariputhri, of Kottakarai village, who does not appear to be an empaneled contractor with the CPWD. He was requested to pay a mere 75,000 Rs. for "7 red sanders, 12 teaks and other woods". However, judging by the total volume of wood and the fact that there were no teak trees in Darkali (see JC report attached), the sum of Rs 75,000/- raises many questions regarding why no proper tender or auction process had taken place to bid for the wood, as per standard procedures.

Please write to: TDC@auroville.services

2023-07-27

1

On 19th March 2023, Mr. Elumalai Hariputhri, the owner of a local sawmill, started to remove the cut trees from the site. Mr. Elumalai Hariputhri did not produce the necessary prior permission, a contract or paper authorising him to remove the red sanders from the site.

All the above pertinent questions, actions and facts spark the need for a thorough investigation of the persons involved by the Forest Department.

To summarise:

1. Trees were cut beyond the corridor recommended by the Joint Committee.
2. Red sanders were cut. Was prior permission obtained for their cutting or removal?
3. The JC listed 14 red sanders to be cut, but a total of 19 red sanders were cut.
4. GB-ATDC members and Antim Singhi supervised the cutting of the trees. Why were they involved with this, instead of the CPWD that is overseeing the work of the Crown and the contractor that removed the wood?
5. Apparently no work order was issued for cutting or removal of trees. No work order was produced onsite.
6. No stock register for the cut wood was maintained by the GB-ATDC to enable a tendering or auction process of the cut wood.
7. The cut wood, including red sanders, was sold without any tender or auction.

attached:

OA 239 of 2021 JC Report 18.8.22, incl list of trees to be felled

2023 04 03 - Report -Darkali water catchments - non-compliance NGT ruling

Report by Satprem dt 2023 03 29 - Crown road, fallen trees and possible corruption

in Service

L'avenir d'Auroville - TDC Town Development Council

Anan Skoles, Divya Lieser, Dorle Heller, Island Lescure, Lata Iyer, Natasha Storey, Tom Gablier

CC:

Honourable Minister Thiru. Siva.V. Meyyanathan , Minister to Government, Department of Environment and Climate Change, Government of Tamil Nadu.

Thiru. Deepak S. Bilgi I.F.S., Director, Dept. of Environment and Climate Change, Gov of TN

Tmt. Supriya Sahu IAS. Addl. Chief Secretary to Government, Dept. of Environment, Climate Change and Forests, Gov. of Tamil Nadu

Please write to: TDC@auroville.services

2023-07-27

2



Report on tree cutting and excavation on the Auroville Crown

Lavenir dAuroville <l.avenir.d.auroville.ra@gmail.com>

26 July 2023 at 15:14

To: Secretary AV Foundation <secretaryavf@auroville.org.in>, avfoundation@auroville.org.in, Jayanti Ravi <jayantiravi@auroville.org.in>, "Ponnusamy .murugesan" <ponnusamy@auroville.org.in>, Jothi Prasad Rajan <prasad@auroville.org.in>, jaya@auroville.org.in, Sindhuja Jagadeesh <sindhuja@auroville.org.in>, "G. Seetharaman" <gsraman@iit.ac.in>, Hemant shekar <hemantshekhar@auroville.org.in>, toby@auroville.org.in, satyakam@auroville.org.in, landboard@auroville.org.in, landboardoffice@auroville.org.in, <ainnraja@auroville.org.in>, venkat-lb@auroville.org.in

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **TDC Town Development Council** <tdc@auroville.services>

Date: Wed, 26 Jul 2023 at 15:10

Subject: Report on tree cutting and excavation on the Auroville Crown

To: Secretary AV Foundation <secretaryavf@auroville.org.in>, <avfoundation@auroville.org.in>, <jayanti.ravi@gmail.com>, Jayanti Ravi <jayantiravi@auroville.org.in>

Cc: <venkat-lb@auroville.org.in>, Tmt Supriya Sahu, I.A.S., <forsec@tn.gov.in>, Ponnusamy .murugesan <ponnusamy@auroville.org.in>, Jothi Prasad Rajan <prasad@auroville.org.in>, <jaya@auroville.org.in>, Sindhuja Jagadeesh <sindhuja@auroville.org.in>, <collrvpm@nic.in>, <chennaicircle@gmail.com>, <cfchen@tn.nic.in>, G. Seetharaman <gsraman@iit.ac.in>, Hemant shekar <hemantshekhar@auroville.org.in>, <toby@auroville.org.in>, <satyakam@auroville.org.in>, <landboard@auroville.org.in>, <landboardoffice@auroville.org.in>, <ainnraja@auroville.org.in>, Working Committee <workingcom@auroville.services>

Auroville, 26th July 2023

TDC 23.043

Subject: Report on tree cutting and excavation on the Auroville Crown

To the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation Office, Dr J Ravi

Over the past weeks, we have noted that many trees have been cut, and excavation and preparation for permanent infrastructure is being undertaken. We remind you that these actions are in serious violation of the NGT judgment dt. 28th April 2022, as these stretches of the Crown have not yet been evaluated and reported on by the Hon'ble Joint Committee, prior to which no work is to be executed on the Crown in these stretches (see report dt. 24 07 2023 attached).

The Office of the Secretary and the GB-ATDC are well aware that any cutting of trees or development in all areas of the Auroville project / Master plan area and on any stretch of the Crown outside of Darkali are serious violations, and it must be clear that permitting these actions may be held against you as a contempt of court.

We again call on you as the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation Office to ensure that all such activities cease forthwith, and to comply with the orders of the Court, until the Joint Committee has inspected, evaluated and submitted a report with its

recommendations to ensure that the environmental impact caused by the construction of the Crown is minimised.

attached: 2023 07 24 [Report - excavation and tree cutting](#)

in Service

L'avenir d'Auroville - TDC Town Development Council

[Anan Skoles](#), [Divya Lieser](#), [Dorle Heller](#), [Island Lescure](#), [Lata Iyer](#), [Natasha Storey](#), [Tom Gablier](#)

CC:

Supriya Sahu - I.A.S, Additional Chief Secretary to Government of Tamil Nadu

Members of the Joint committee

Members - Auroville Land Board

Auroville Foundation Office

GB-ATDC : Dr. G. Seetharaman, Ms. Jaya Berggreen-Clausen, Mr. Hemant Shekhar, Ms.

Sindhuja Jagadeesh, Mr. Toby Neuman, Mr. Jothi Prasad Rajan, Mr. Ponnusamy Murugesan,

Mr. Govind Ranjan

Working Committee of the RA

2 attachments



2023 07 26 - letter to AVFO J. Ravi -2023 07 24 report.pdf

97K

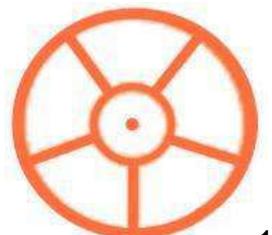


2023 07 24 report - excavation and trees cut.pdf

8360K



2023 07 24 - report on tree cutting and excavation on the Auroville Crown in violation of the NGT judgement



Trees cut in several areas along the Crown and excavation work continues prior to JC report.

In the last week we have noted that many trees have been cut and excavation for permanent infrastructure is being undertaken. Both these actions are in serious violation of the NGT judgment dt. 28th April 2022, as these stretches of the Crown have not yet been evaluated and reported on by the Hon'ble Joint Committee prior to which no work is to be executed on the Crown.

In the NGT hearing on 14th of March 2023 it was stated by the learned counsel appearing for the foundation- that **no cutting of trees would be undertaken beyond the recommendation given by the Joint Committee**, meaning the Darkali stretch. As so far the Joint Committee has not given any recommendations for ANY stretch of the crown outside of the Darkali park. We have to conclude that all work pertaining to the Crown outside of the Darkali park is therefore a serious violation of the NGT judgement of 28th April 2022.

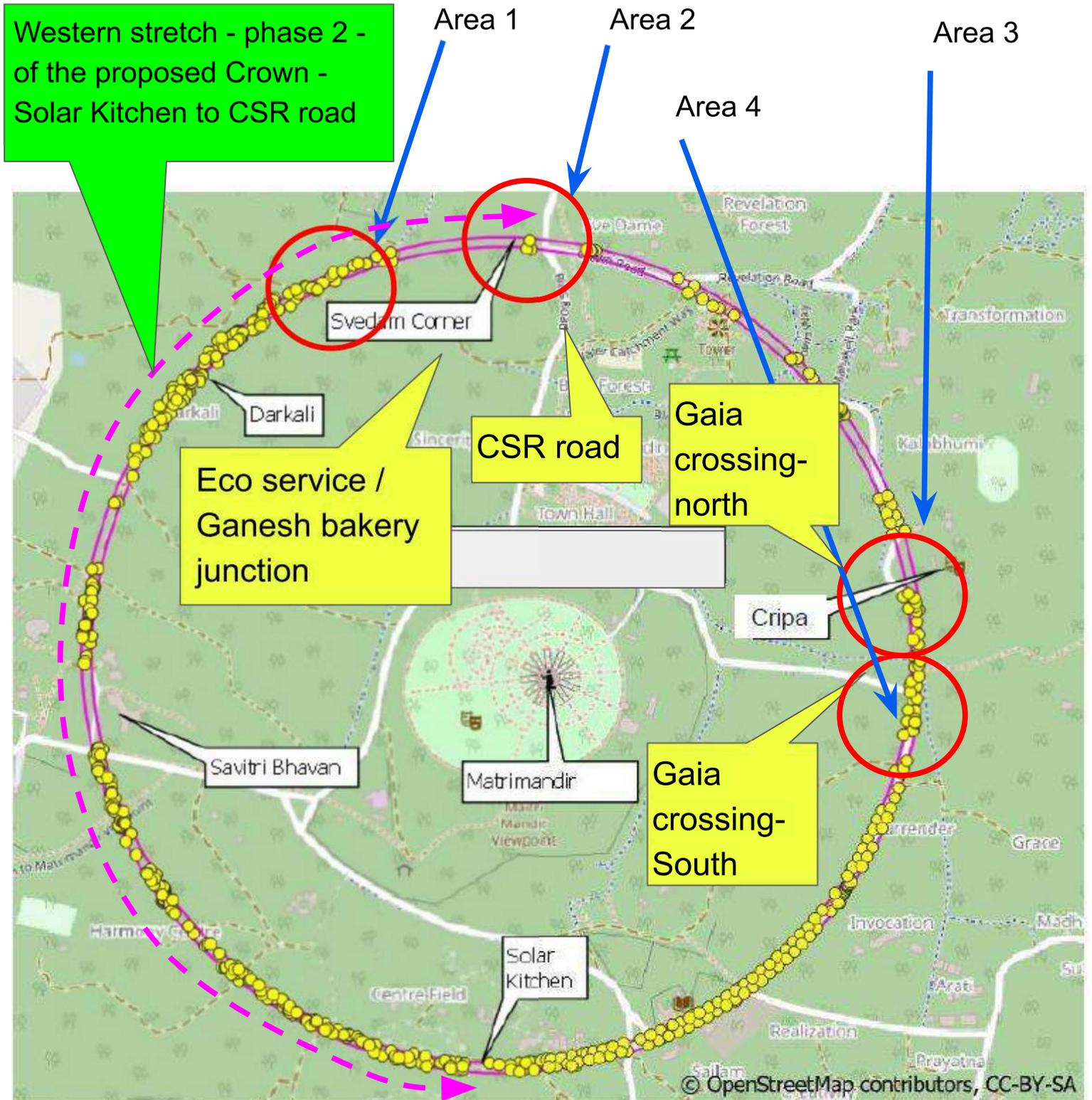
While we understand that the Auroville Land Board as well as an outside contractor have received intimations from the Auroville Foundation Office to cut trees on stretches of the Crown that have not yet been evaluated by the JC and therefore the Auroville Foundation Office and the GB-ATDC are well aware these violations and it must be clear that it is also their duty to ensure that these court orders are followed and no third party or otherwise is permitted to cut any trees on or near the trajectory of the proposed Crown project, until the Joint Committee has inspected, evaluated and submitted a report with its recommendations to ensure that the environmental impact caused by the construction of the Crown is minimised. We again call on the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation Office to ensure that all such activities cease forthwith and to comply with the orders of the Court.

Area 1 and 2 fall outside the 1st phase of 2.1Km for which the Notice inviting Tender (NIT no. 02/2023-24/EE & SM(C)/PPD) was issued and a bid was made by the contractor currently executing the work.

Many of the felled evergreen (TDEF) trees were planted in **consultation with the Auroville planning Authority**. A good number of which were planted between 1996 and 2005. Calculated by the recent value of a tree as per the Supreme court ruling Rs 74500/- per year of the trees age - **each of these trees would potentially have a value of Rs 20,11,500/-**.

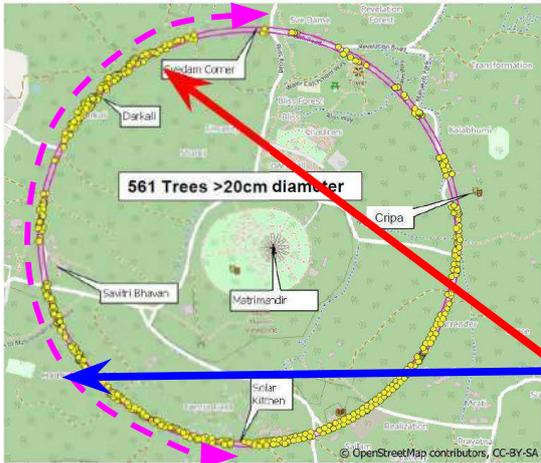
Trees cut in several areas along the Crown.

We have documented and noted that trees have been cut, the ground is being leveled and excavation for permanent infrastructure is being undertaken in the following areas



Area 1 - North-western stretch of the proposed Crown trajectory.

This western area (Solar kitchen to CSR road) is not part of the CPWD tender dt. ???? for 2.1 KM. at Rs 9.??? crore



- 1) Area where the trees have been cut and a JCB is leveling / digging between the road to Eco Service and the Darkali road

Western stretch - phase 2 - of the proposed Crown - Solar Kitchen to CSR road -



North-western stretch of the proposed Crown trajectory

Several trees cut on the 18th of July 2023 in area between the road to Eco Service and the Darkali road



Trees cut on crown trajectory



North-western stretch of the proposed Crown trajectory

JCB undertaking leveling and digging on 20th July 2023 between the road to Eco Service and the Darkali road - All trees have been felled



Area 1 - North-western stretch of the proposed Crown trajectory



Same area;
top: 18th July 2023
bottom: 21st July 2023

Area 1 - North-western stretch of the proposed Crown trajectory



Same area;
top: 20th July 2023
bottom: 21st July 2023

Area 1 - North-western stretch of the proposed Crown trajectory

Wood of the felled trees being removed - All trees have been felled



North-western stretch of the proposed Crown trajectory

Leveling and digging executed prior to an evaluation by the Joint Committee. Area between road to Eco Service and the Darkali road



Photos taken
24 07 2023



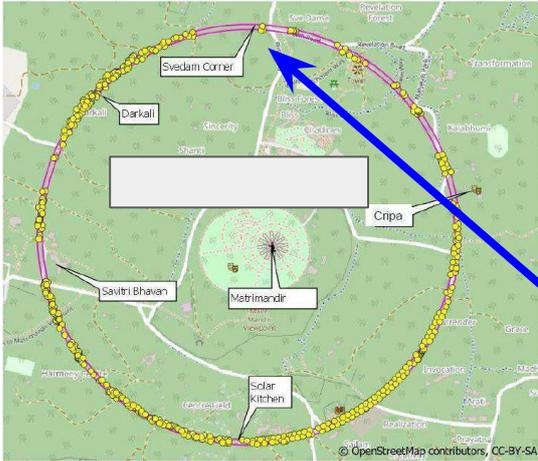
North-western stretch of the proposed Crown trajectory



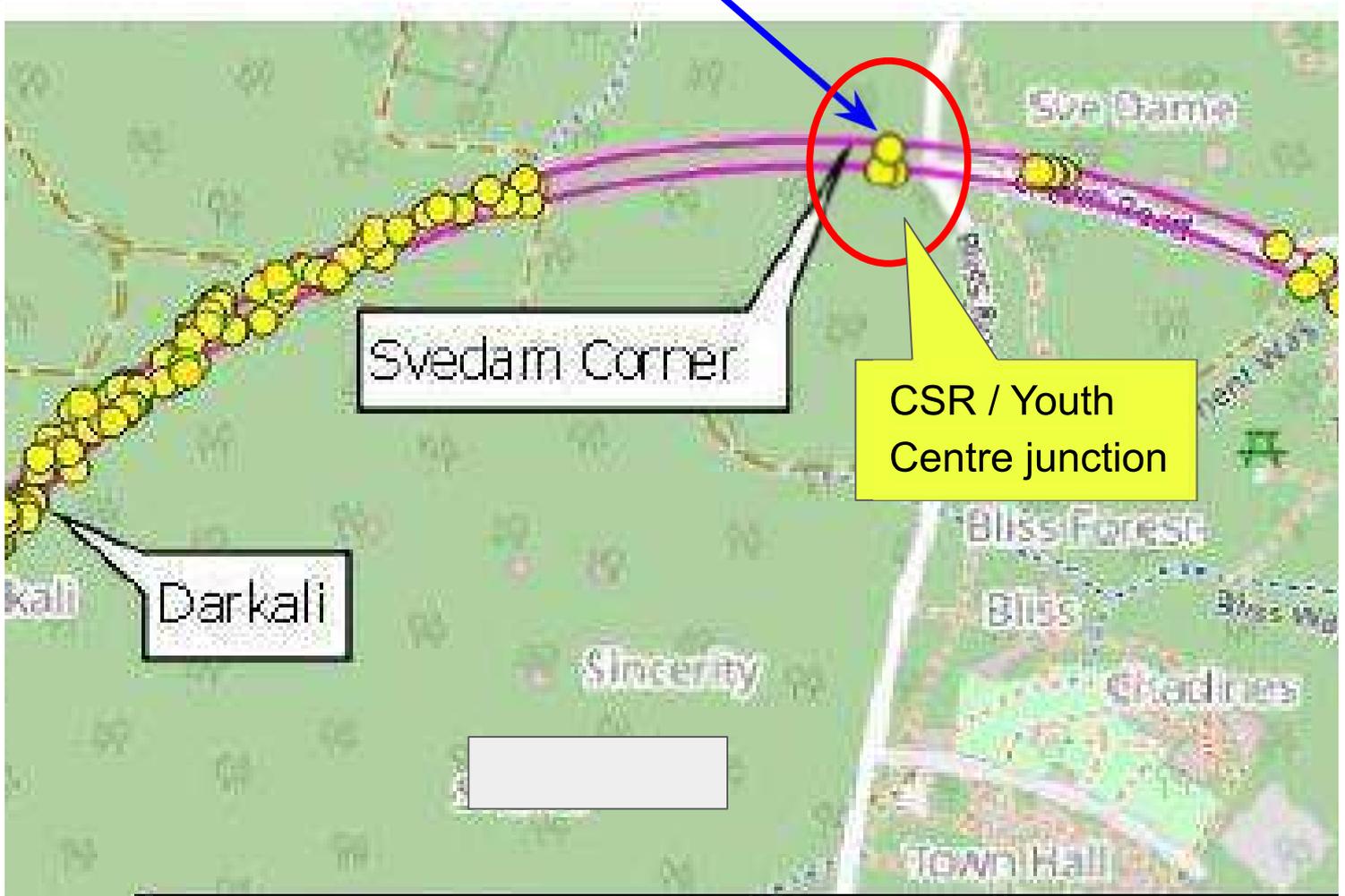
Existing canyon check dam with overflow

Digging and leveling work up to the edge of the canyon - Prior to an evaluation of the area by the Joint Committee.

Area 2 - Northern stretch of the proposed Crown trajectory - between Eco-Service road and CSR road



2) Area where the trees have been cut and a JCB is leveling / digging next to the CSR - Youth Centre junction



Area 2 - Northern stretch of the proposed Crown trajectory - between Eco-Service road and CSR road



extensive clearing and tree cutting - looking towards Eco-service road



looking west towards Eco Service road from CSR road

Area 2 - Northern stretch of the proposed Crown trajectory - between Eco-Service road and CSR road



Stumps of the two trees cut near Gaia crossing, adjacent to the infrastructure channel. The wood was removed just after cutting.



Fresh sawdust from the cut trees

Area 2 - Northern stretch of the proposed Crown trajectory - between Eco-Service road and CSR road

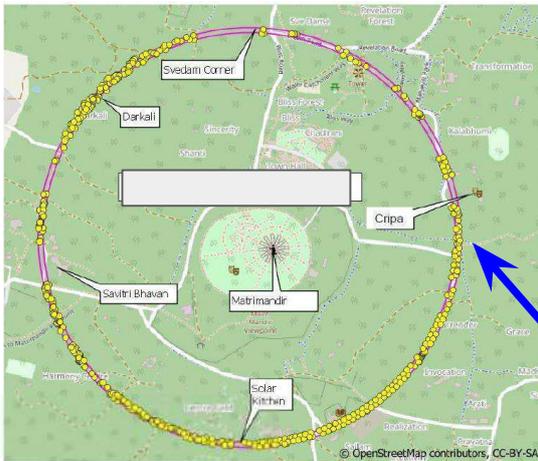


extensive
clearing and
leveling -
looking
towards
Eco-service
road

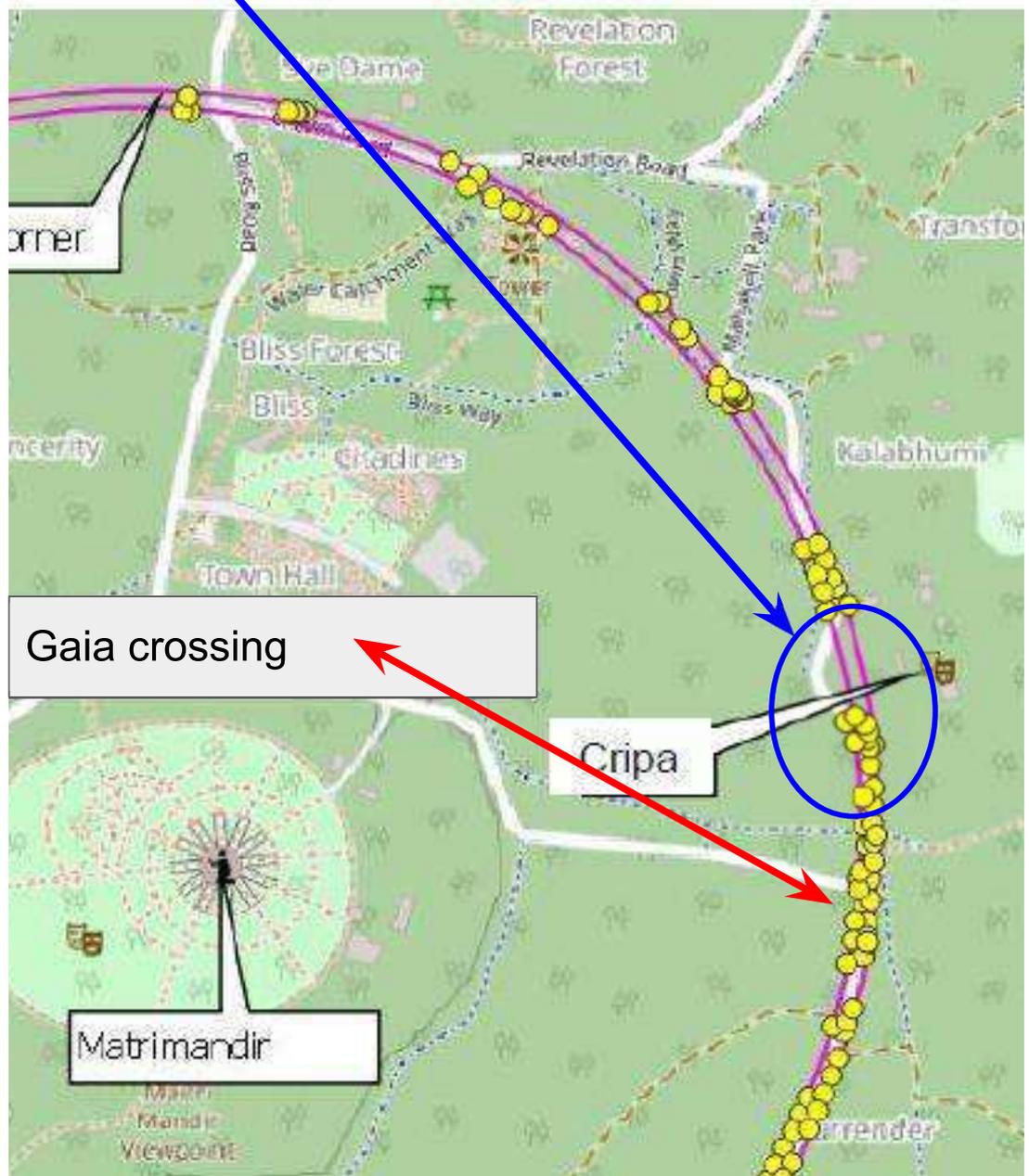


looking
towards CSR
road / Youth
Centre

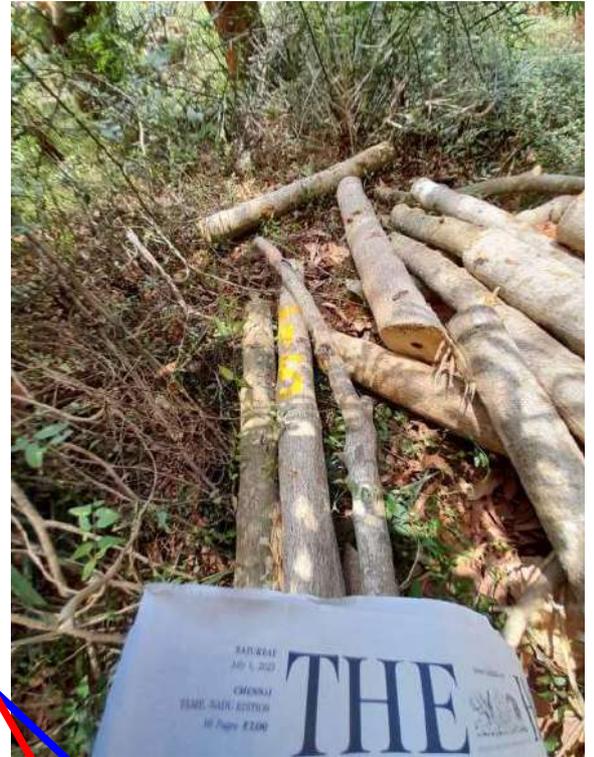
Area 3 - North-eastern area of the proposed Crown trajectory - between Kalabhumi and Gaia crossing



Several trees and evergreen bushes bordering the private land were felled in this area recently. Such species vengis (*Pterocarpus marsupium*) and a *Pterospermum suberifolium*. Some of these were planted between 1996 and 2005 in consultation with Auroville planning authorities.



Area 3 - North-eastern area of the proposed Crown trajectory - between Kalabhumi and Gaia crossing



Same tree

Same area;
top: 7th July 2023
bottom: 21st July 2023



Trees on the Auroville land bordering the private lands all felled.

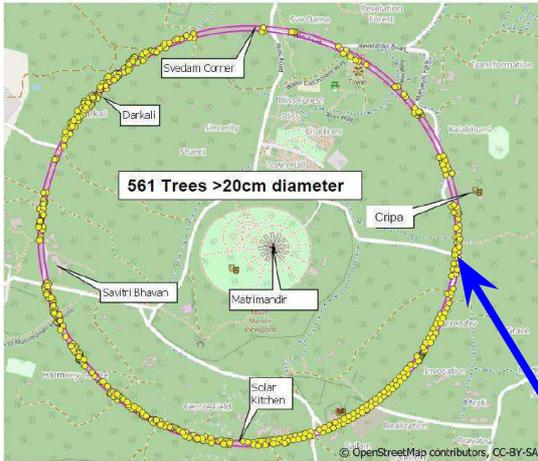
Area 3 - North-eastern area of the proposed Crown trajectory - between Kalabhumi and Gaia crossing



Trees on the Auroville land bordering the private lands all felled.

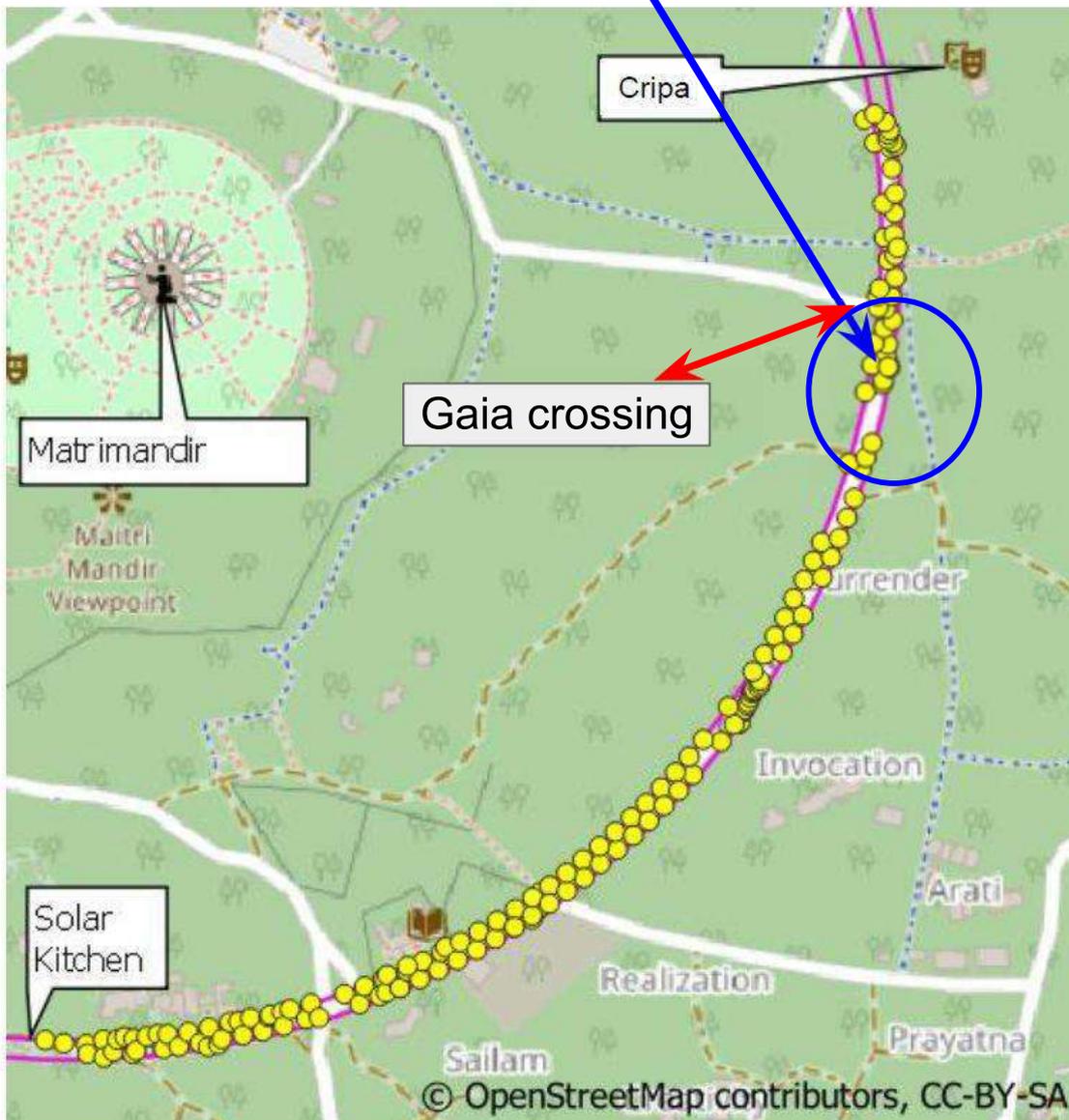


Area 4 - Eastern area of the proposed Crown trajectory - between Gaia crossing and Mahalakshmi home



Many trees and evergreen bushes that were planted between 1996 and 2005 in consultation with Auroville planning authorities to form a green buffer between the road and park were felled in this area recently. Some of them rare species such as Ebonies (*Diospyros ebenum*), Satin woods (*Chloroxylon swietenia*), Scarlet sterculia (*Firmiana colorata*), Suragada *augustifolia*, *Tricalysia sphaerocarpa*, Miracle (*memeceylon umbelata*) to name a few

TreeScapes



Area 4 - Eastern area of the proposed Crown trajectory - between Gaia crossing and Mahalakshmi home



Tree were cut on both sides of the proposed crown trajectory. This is another gross violation of the NGT judgements as all these areas of the Crown have not - to the best of our knowledge - been evaluated by the Joint committee. And therefore it is premature that a specific width or trajectory be assumed. As well as constituting disrespect for the efforts and work of the Joint Committee.

Many trees felled just south of Gaia crossing. These Evergreen (TDEF) trees were planted in **consultation with the Auroville planning Authority**. They were planted between 1996 and 2005. Calculated by the recent value of a tree as per the Supreme court ruling Rs 74500/- per year of the trees age - **each of these trees would potentially have a value of Rs 20,11,500/-**.



Area 4 - Eastern area of the proposed Crown trajectory - between Gaia crossing and Mahalakshmi home

Stumps and fresh sawdust of the trees cut south of Gaia crossing in infrastructure corridor of the proposed Crown towards private lands..



Area 4 - Eastern area of the proposed Crown trajectory - between Gaia crossing and Mahalakshmi home



Stumps and fresh sawdust of the trees cut south of Gaia crossing on the outer edge of the proposed Crown. Looking towards Gaia crossing / north.



Area 4 - Eastern area of the proposed Crown trajectory - between Gaia crossing and Mahalakshmi home



Concrete base for permanent infrastructure being laid **prior to any evaluation of this area of the Crown by the Joint Committee**, whose task it is to evaluate the environmental impact and make recommendation to minimise damages by a possible realignment of narrowing of the proposed trajectory of the Crown. Photos taken looking towards the fence of private land near Mahalakshmi park



Auroville, 8th July 2023

TDC 23.041

OPEN LETTER TO AUROVILLE LAND BOARD

Subject: Serious violation of the NGT judgement - tree cutting

Dear Land Board members, Mrs. Meenakshi, Special Officer, Mr.Ponnambalam, Special Officer, Mr. Rajavelu, Mr.Raja, Mr. Satyakam, Mr.Venkat

We understand that the Auroville Land Board received an intimation from the office of the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation to let the trees be cut on a stretch of land stewarded by Mr. A. Vohra.

It is neither in your nor in the purview of the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation office or Mr. A Vohra to permit the cutting of trees prior to the evaluation and submission of the Report for the entire Crown by the Hon'ble Joint Committee.

In an NGT hearing on 14th March 2023 (see court order attached), hon'ble Mr. Vaibhav R Venkatesh stated - on behalf of the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation Office - that no cutting of trees will be undertaken beyond the recommendation given by the Joint Committee, meaning the Darkali stretch.

It is with great disappointment that **we have witnessed the Auroville Land Board being engaged in the cutting of trees near the Gaia crossing** as well as the fact that you are acting against the decision of the Residents' Assembly taken in the January 2022 RAD. It is very unfortunate that the Land Board chooses to willfully ignore both the judgement of the Hon'ble NGT dt 28th April 2022 as well as an RA Decision. Please be aware of the legal implications of your actions. **Any cutting of trees is a direct violation of the court judgement and is not to be taken lightly**

As we have explained to you verbally several times, unless you have written and signed documentation intimating you to proceed with or be party to the cutting of trees on any part of the proposed Crown trajectory - outside of the Darkali park stretch - or anywhere inside the Auroville project / Master plan area on lands that have not been developed may make you personally liable for the actions taken. This includes the clearing of shrubs and understory as well as young trees, as is being undertaken by Mr. A. Grandcolas on lands that should be stewarded by the Auroville Land Board between Town Hall and Martimandir.

Please write to: TDC@auroville.services

2023-07-08

1



Photo taken on 3rd July 2023

*attached: 2023 07 07 - report - trees cut on crown trajectory
NGT Court order dt. 14th March 2023*

CC:

AVFO

Secretary of the Auroville Foundation Office

Working Committee of the RA

Auroville Council

CPWD

in Service

L'avenir d'Auroville - TDC Town Development Council

Anan, Dorle, Divya L, Island, Lata, Natasha S, Tom G

Please write to: TDC@auroville.services

2023-07-08

2



Auroville, 7th July 2023

TDC 23.040

Subject: Failing to ensure no trees are cut on the proposed crown trajectory

To the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation Office, Dr. Jayanti Ravi,

This past week, we have documented several instances of trees being cut on the proposed trajectory of the Crown (see report attached). As you are well aware, that goes against the NGT judgement dated 28th April 2022, which was reiterated on March, 14th 2023.

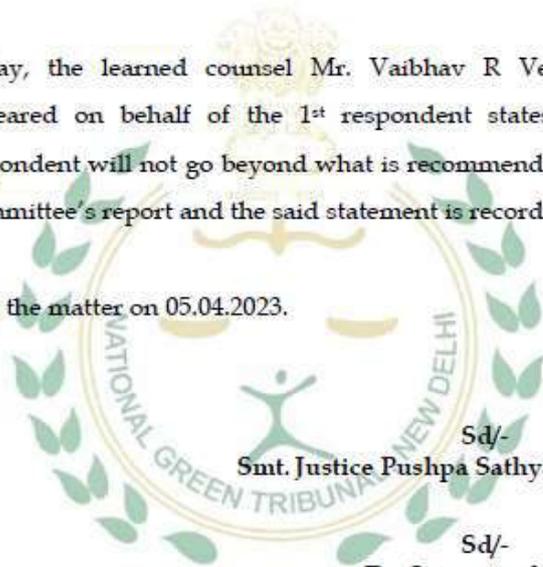
In fact, during an NGT hearing on 14th March 2023 (see excerpt below), hon'ble Mr. Vaibhav R Venkatesh stated - on your behalf - that no cutting of trees will be undertaken beyond the recommendation given by the Joint Committee, meaning the Darkali stretch.

We understand that the Auroville Land Board has received an intimation from your office to cut trees on a stretch of land stewarded by Mr. A. Vohra, as well as being engaged in the cutting of trees near the Gaia crossing. It is neither in your nor in the purview of Mr. A Vohra to permit the cutting of trees prior to the evaluation and submission of the Report for the entire crown by the Hon'ble Joint Committee.

Therefore, it is your duty to ensure that these court orders are followed and no third party or otherwise is permitted to cut any trees on or near the trajectory of the proposed Crown project, until the Joint Committee has inspected, evaluated and submitted a report with its recommendations to ensure that the environmental impact caused by the construction of the Crown is minimised.

*attached: 2023 07 06 - report - trees cut on crown trajectory
NGT Court order dt. 14th March 2023*

5. The above order specifically indicates that even the crown road work can be continued by the 1st respondent herein without cutting any trees or where there are no trees.
6. Though the order protects the area of construction, the apprehension of the applicant is that the 1st respondent herein is cutting trees even outside the stretch of crown road work/beyond the recommendation of the Joint Committee.
7. Today, the learned counsel Mr. Vaibhav R Venkatesh who appeared on behalf of the 1st respondent states that the 1st respondent will not go beyond what is recommended in the Joint Committee's report and the said statement is recorded.
8. Post the matter on 05.04.2023.



Sd/-
Smt. Justice Pushpa Sathyanarayana, JM

Sd/-
Dr. Satyagopal Korlapati, EM

CC:

members - Auroville Land Board

Auroville Foundation Office

GB-ATDC : Dr. G. Seetharaman, Ms. Jaya Berggreen-Clausen, Mr. Hemant Shekhar, Ms. Sindhuja Jagadeesh, Mr. Toby Neuman, Mr. Jothi Prasad Rajan, Mr. Ponnusamy Murugesan, Mr. Govind Ranjan

in Service

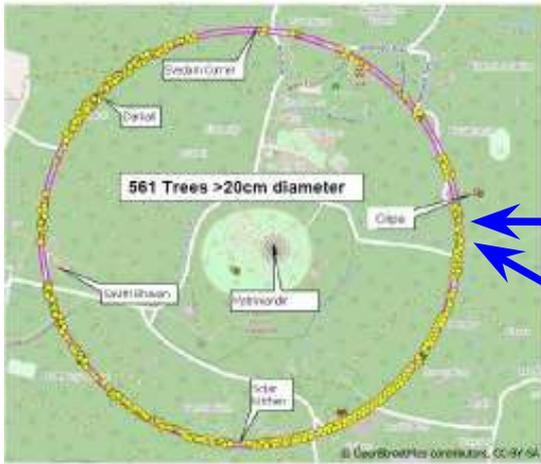
L'avenir d'Auroville - TDC Town Development Council

Anan Skoles, Divya Lieser, Dorle Heller, Island Lescure, Lata Iyer, Natasha Storey, Tom Gablier

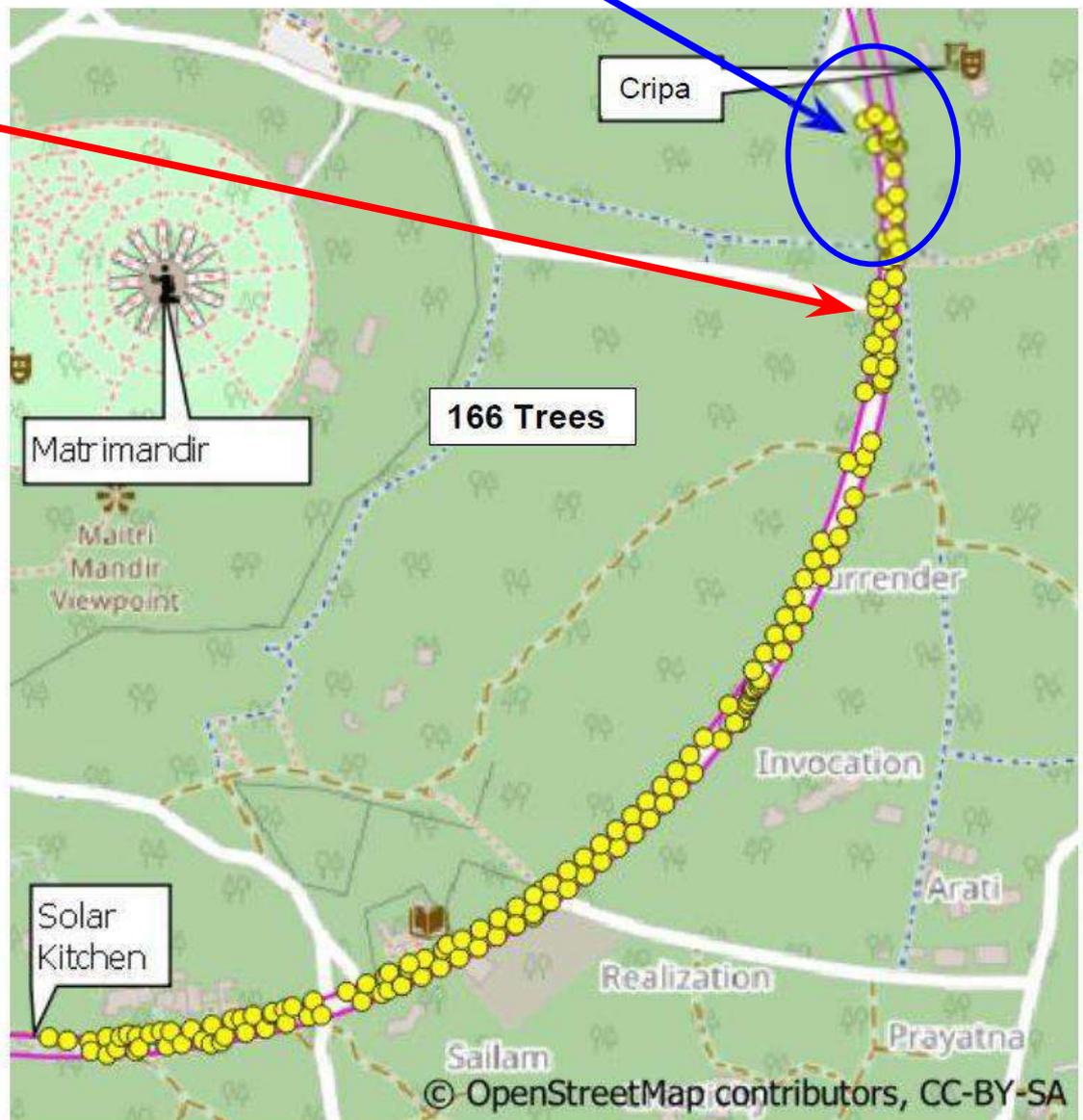
Please write to: TDC@auroville.services

A/ Four (4) trees cut north Gaia crossing

a) Area where the trees were cut north of Gaia crossing



Gaia crossing



b) Work done by Land Board

On July 3rd, four (4) trees were cut down by the Auroville Land Board (*Photo 1*) and the wood was removed.



Photo 1, taken on July 3rd, 2023

c) Position of the trees

The trees were standing in the path of the infrastructure channel (*Photo 2*) and extension of the proposed Crown trajectory (*Photo 3*).



Photo 2

Less than 50cm

Photo 3



On the direct trajectory of the proposed Crown

d) Documentation of events

2 trees cut north of Gaia crossing adjacent to infrastructure channel.



Stumps of the two trees cut near Gaia crossing, adjacent to the infrastructure channel. The wood was removed just after cutting.

Fresh sawdust from the cut trees



2 more trees cut on the north of Gaia crossing in extension of the proposed Crown towards private lands



Stumps of the two trees cut near Gaia crossing in extension of the proposed Crown towards private lands. The wood was removed just after cutting.

Five (5) more trees cut south of Gaia crossing in infrastructure corridor of the proposed Crown towards private lands adjoining Mahalakshmi park



Fend of private land near Mahalakshmi park

edges of the proposed Crown

Stumps of one of the five trees cut south of Gaia crossing in extension of the proposed Crown infrastructure corridor.

Stumps and fresh sawdust of the trees cut south of Gaia crossing in infrastructure corridor of the proposed Crown towards private lands. The wood was removed just after cutting.



Gaia crossing
looking north

edge of the
proposed Crown

Stumps and fresh sawdust of the trees cut south of Gaia crossing in infrastructure corridor of the proposed Crown towards private lands. The wood was removed just after cutting.



Fence of private
land near
Mahalakshmi
park

edge of the
proposed Crown

Stumps of two of the five trees cut south of Gaia crossing in extension of the proposed Crown infrastructure corridor.



Fence of private land near Mahalakshmi park

edge of the proposed Crown

Stumps of two of the five trees cut south of Gaia crossing in extension of the proposed Crown infrastructure corridor.

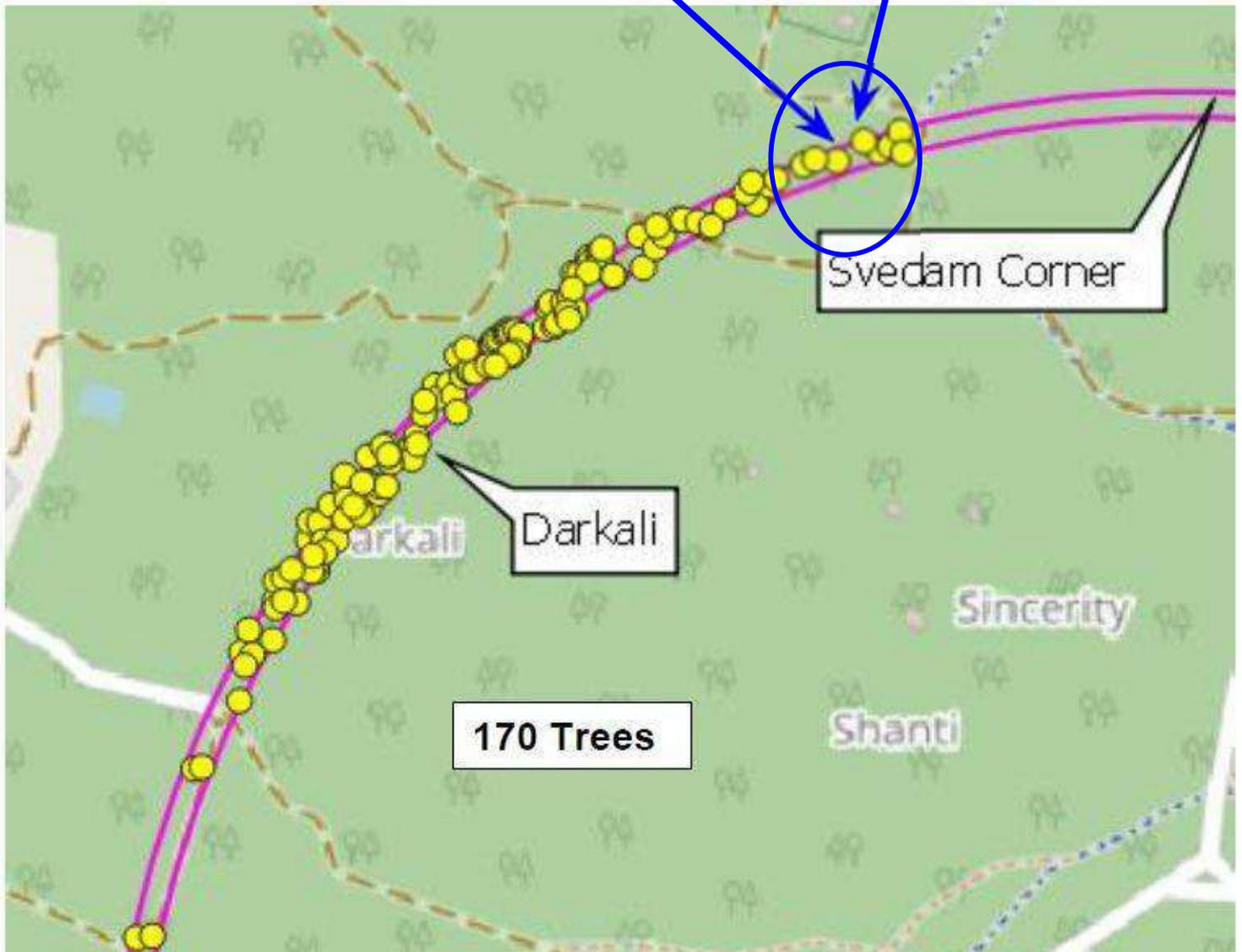


C/ Fourteen (14) trees cut on north-western stretch

a) Area where the trees were cut between the road to Eco Service and the Darkali road



Arundhati
Treescapes



14 trees cut on the proposed Crown trajectory between the road to Eco Service and the Darkali road.



Freshly cut tree and stumps

b) Documentation of events

Area on the proposed Crown trajectory between the road to Eco Service and the Darkali road.



Stumps and logs of the freshly cut trees

Area on the proposed Crown trajectory between the road to Eco Service and the Darkali road



Freshly cut trees being cut into small pieces by sawmill owner personnel



Auroville, 1st July 2023

TDC 23.037

Subject: Damage to trees - Auroville Crown

To the assistant engineer and the deputy director Horticulture,

We have been informed that the following issue pertaining to the victimisation, damage and suffocation of trees lies in your purview.

As stated in the communication to you from Shashank Upadhyay, Executive Engineer and Senior Manager (civil), Puducherry Project Division dated 30.06.2023, we hope you will do the needful to address the issues. Please contact one of the many Auroville experts in the field of tree conservation to enlist their assistance if needed. See contact details below.

Island Lescure
Director - Consulting Arborist
island@treescapes.in
+91 7598103616

Please find attached a letter and reports previously sent on the same.

attached:

2023 05 31 - Damage to trees along the Crown, Auroville
2023 05 29 - Tree Damage Report
2023 05 29 What to never do to a tree
2023 03 19 - Removal of trees - Crown RoW
2023 05 09 Tree uprooting report

in Service

L'avenir d'Auroville - TDC Town Development Council

Anan Skoles, Divya Lieser, Dorle Heller, Island Lescure, Lata Iyer, Natasha Storey, Tom Gablier

Please write to: TDC@auroville.services

2023-07-01

1

Crown, opposite Humanscapes -
Residential zone 1 - Auroville

19th March 2023

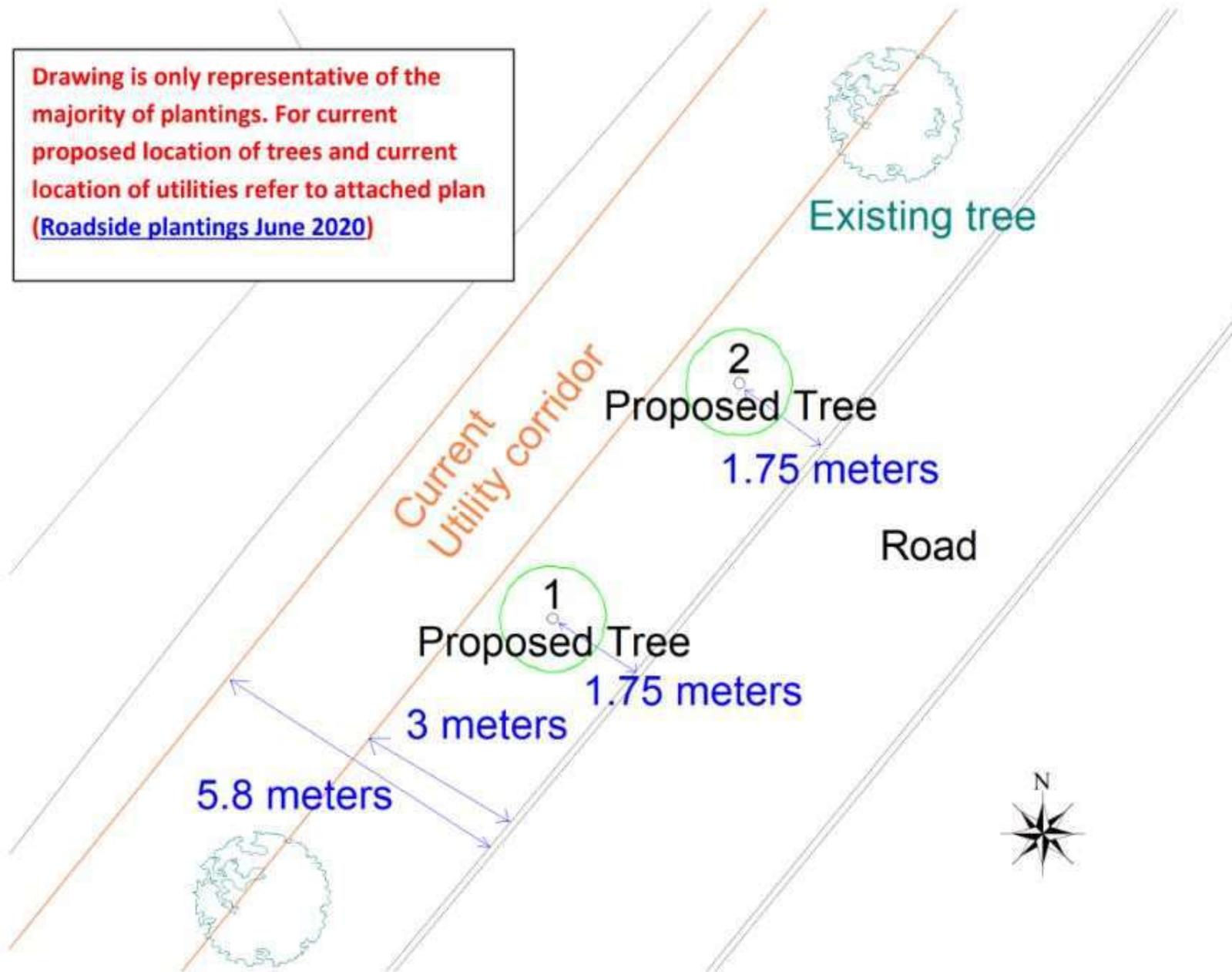
tree removal from the Crown RoW.



Current proposed location: Along the road from the Auroville Library to Mahalakshmi Home.

Current objectives: Create more shade, wildlife corridors and help reduce traffic speed along roads taking into consideration the road and nearby utilities. In order to do that, I propose planting 57 trees.

Planting locations:



**Crown Road
Auroville**

Proposed Trees Plan

SCALE: 1 : 1000 DATE: 10-09-2020

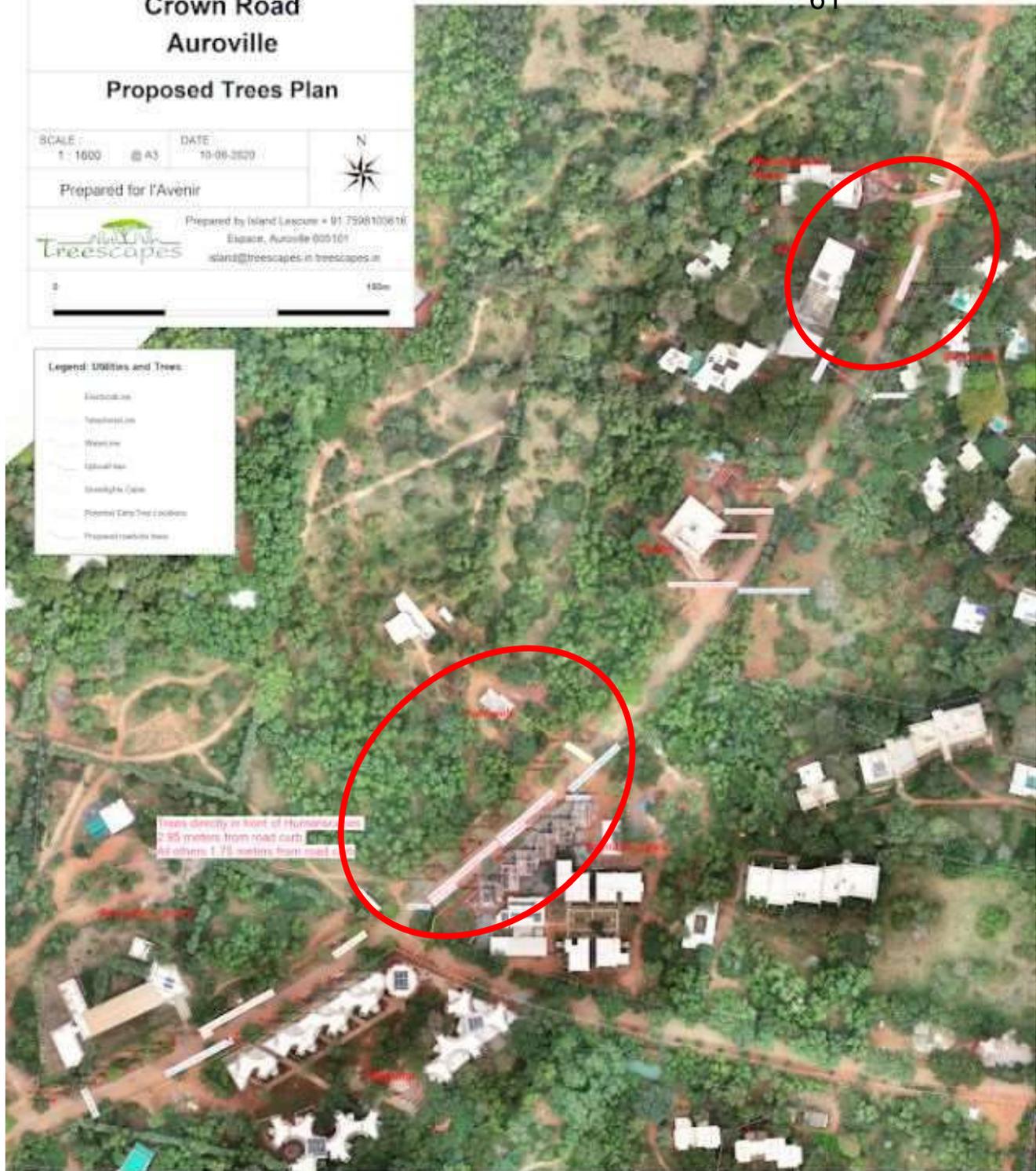
Prepared for l'Avenir

Prepared by Island Landscape + 01 7598103610
Espace, Auroville 605101
island@treescapes.in treescapes.in

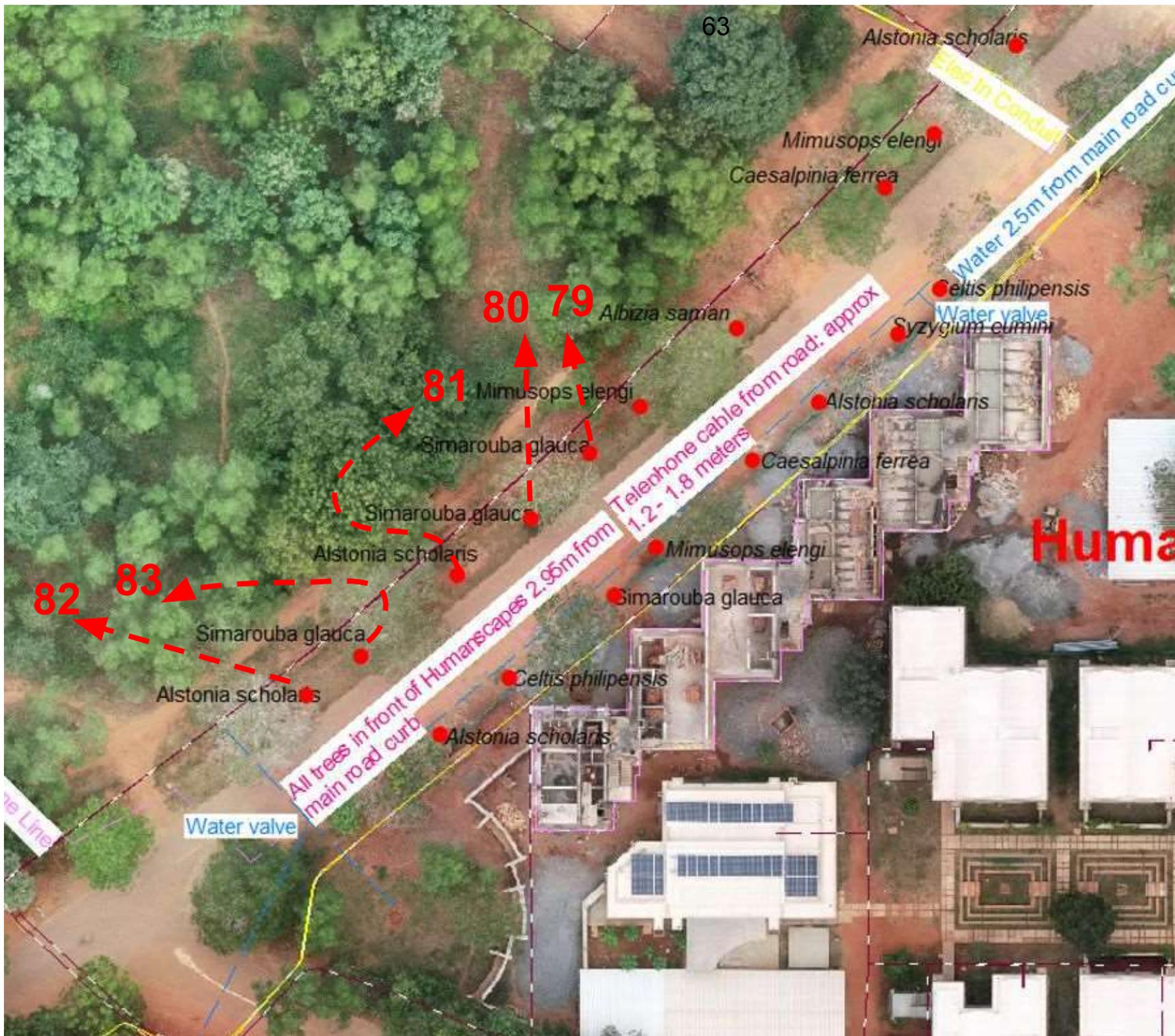
0 100m

Legend: Utilities and Trees:

- Electricity line
- Telephone line
- Water line
- Lighting line
- Sanitary Cycle
- Planned Tree/Tree positions
- Proposed road/line



Areas in which several trees were removed from the edge of the Crown road to the other side of the cycle path



Approximate positions to which the trees were moved / transplanted hastily in a haphazard and unplanned manner



Original position
Tree no 79 = *Simarouba glauca*



Original position
Tree no 80 = *Simarouba glauca*



Original position
Tree no 80 = Simarouba glauca



Tree no 80 + 79 = *Simarouba glauca* (2 nos)

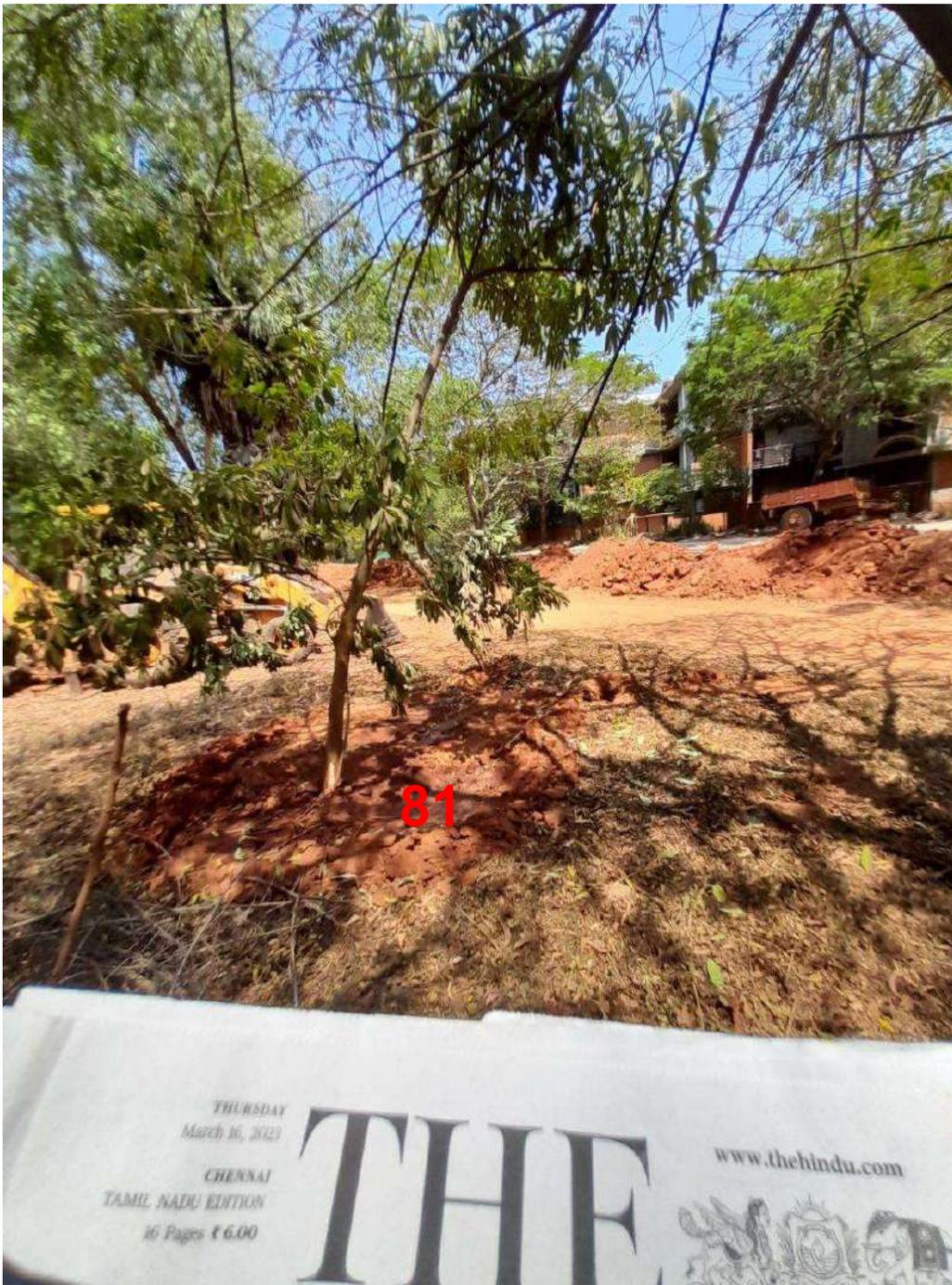


Original position

Tree no. 81 = *Alstonia scholaris*



Original position
Tree no. 81 = *Alstonia scholaris*



Severe bark
damage



Tree no. 81= *Alstonia scholaris*



8th January 2023 - trees on the crown opposite to Humans scapes towards Sante



19th March 2023 - trees **missing** (no. 82 + 83) on the crown opposite to Humans scapes towards Sante



Original position

Tree no. 82= *Alstonia scholaris*

Tree no. 83 = *Simarouba glauca*



Position transplanted to
Tree no.82 = *Alstonia scholaris* on left
Tree no. 83= *Simarouba glauca* on right



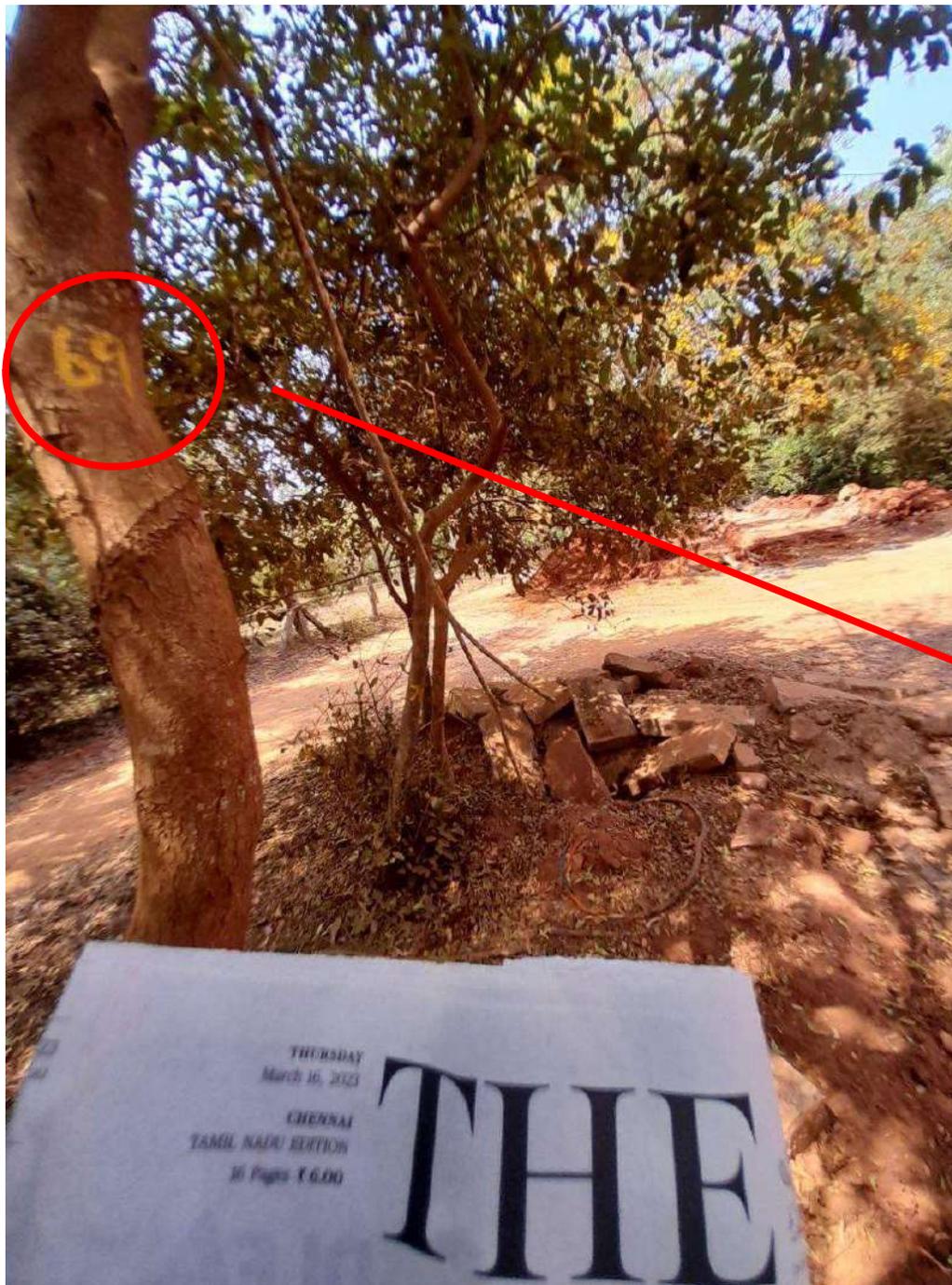
Position transplanted to
Tree no.82 = *Alstonia scholaris* on left
Tree no. 83= *Simarouba glauca* on right



16th March 2023 - small tree + tree no. 69 on the crown at Mahalakshmi home / Grace turn off



19th March 2023 - small tree, tree no. 69 + road sign **missing** on the crown at Mahalakshmi home / Grace turn off



1) 16th March 2023 - tree no. 69 on the crown at Mahalakshmi home / Grace turn off



2) 19th March 2023 - tree no. 69 is **gone** on the crown at Mahalakshmi home / Grace turn off



79



19th March 2023 - tree no. 68 + 69 + road sign missing on the crown at Mahalakshmi home

16th March 2023 - tree no. 68 + 69 on the crown at Mahalakshmi home

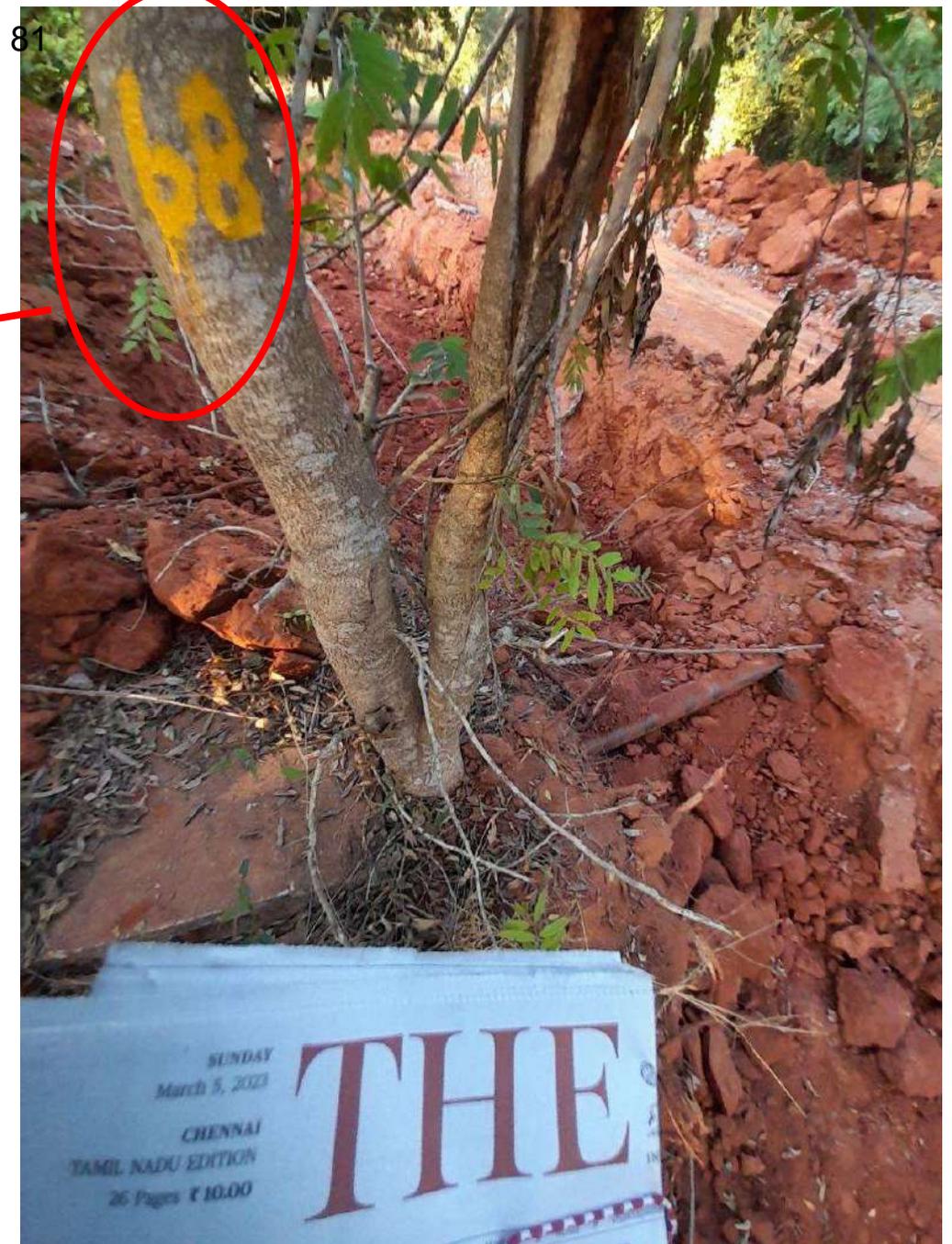
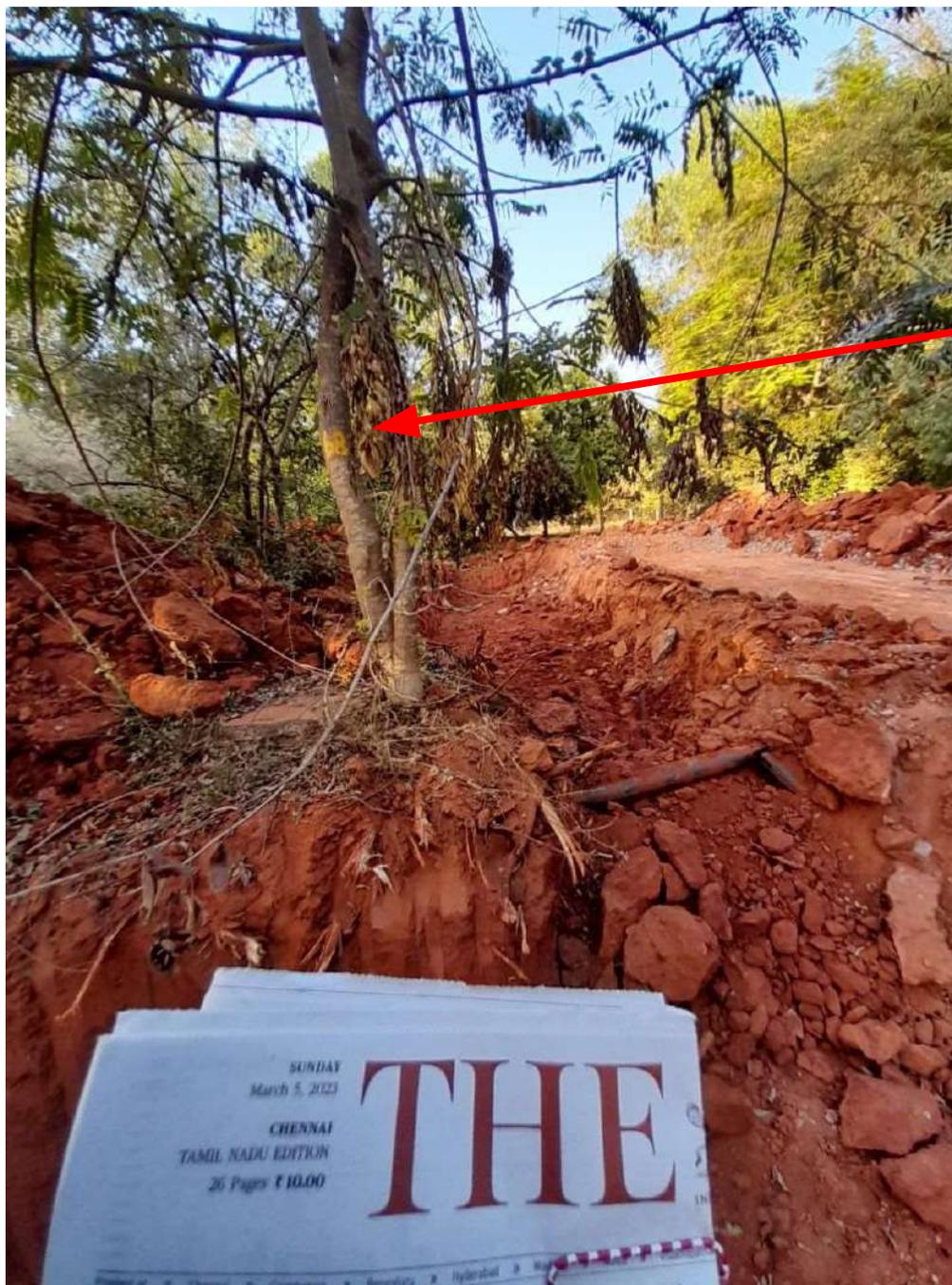


30



5th March 2023 - road sign on the crown at Mahalakshmi home / Grace turn off

19th March 2023 - road sign **missing** on the crown at Mahalakshmi home / Grace turn off



16th + 5th March 2023 - tree no 68 on the crown at Mahalakshmi park towards private land

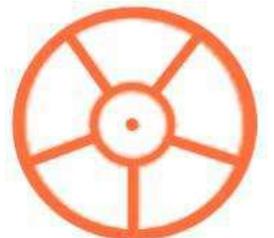


5th March 2023 - tree no 68 on the crown at Mahalakshmi park towards private land. 19th March tree no 68 is gone

Factors that are detrimental to the chances of survival of the transplanted trees.

- **Season** - mid March the hot dry summer is about to start
- **Root damage** - The roots of most of the trees was already damaged before transplanting due to the trench digging in direct proximity to the roots as well as exposure to the sun for many days
- **Planting holes** - the holes dug to replant the trees are small and were hastily dug by a JCB No care was taken to protect the roots
- **Soil preparation** - the trees were transplanted into the dry soil without any prior watering of either the tree or the soil

The above factors make it very unlikely that these trees will survive.





2023 05 29 - Tree Damage report



Tree damage report

Felling a tree is not the only way to cause its death, see article below.

Here are six types of damage that seriously injure and potentially kill it, all observed in multiple examples along the Crown during the recent months in Auroville:

1. Root damage due to trench digging

Cut roots can reduce a tree's health and structural integrity. The closer to the trunk, the bigger number and the bigger the size, the more it negatively affects the tree.

Over 208 trees along the Crown have damaged roots due to digging and infrastructure laying.





2. Bark injuries

A tree's bark is essential for the circulation of the sap that carries the tree's vital nutrients between leaves and roots. Removing its bark destroys its metabolism, and if done extensively, it leads to its death. **Along the Crown, more than 39 trees have damaged bark. Additionally, around 30% of the trees with root damage also have damaged bark.**



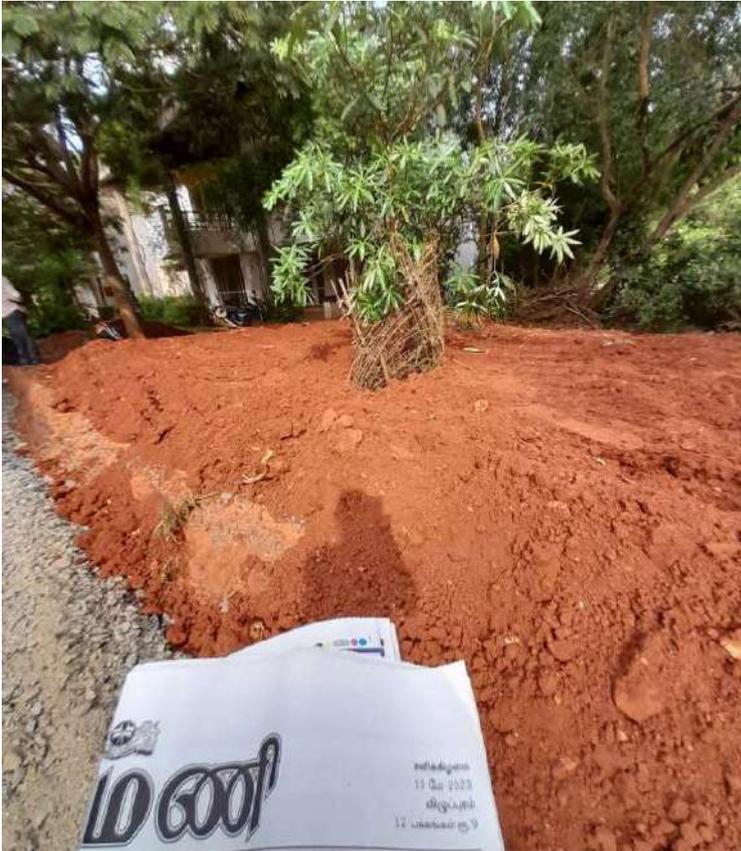


3. Suffocation by piling and/or compacting soil around its trunk

A tree's roots absorb not only nutrients but vital oxygen through the soil. Piling up and/or compacting the soil prevents oxygen from reaching the roots. In addition, covering the trunk with soil makes it susceptible to rot and diseases, potentially resulting in the tree's death.

Earth is piled up on tree trunks in numerous locations along the Crown, in some places up to 1 m high. A supervisor assured that the height would be reduced by compacting the soil (!).

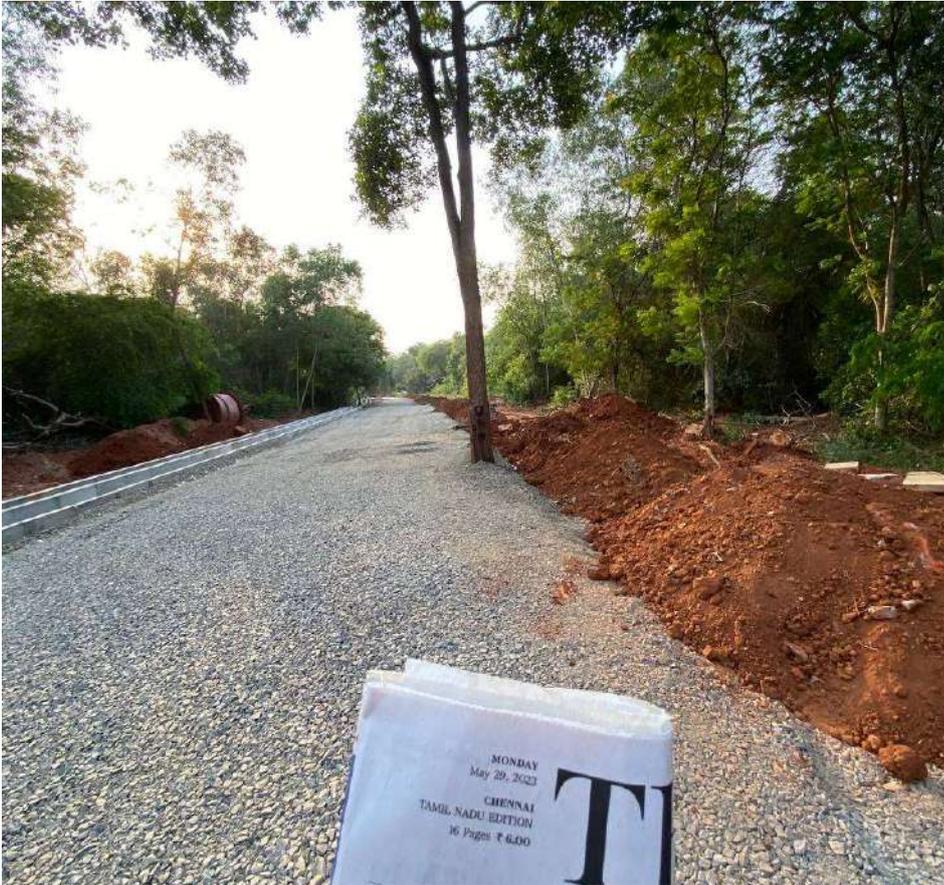
At least 37 trees on the Crown are suffocating due to excessive soil piled around the trunk.

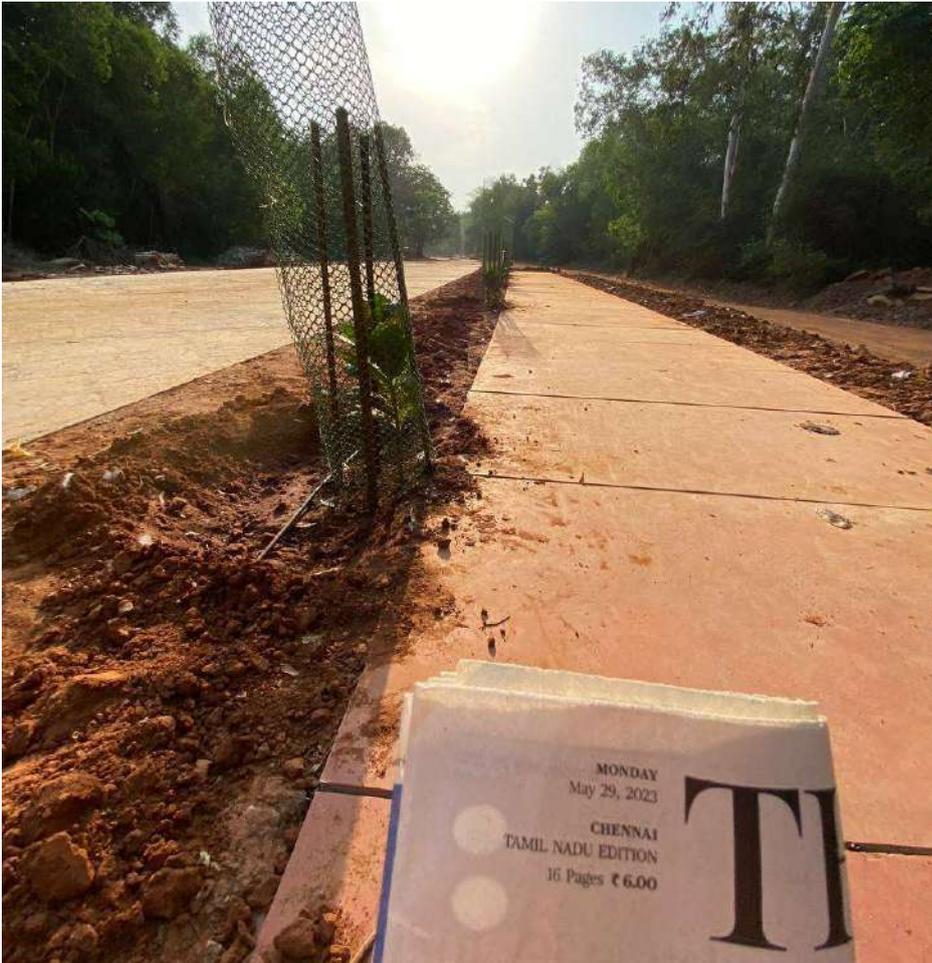


4. Concreting in close proximity to trees

For similar reasons, it is illegal (and by the Delhi Preservation of Trees Act, 1994, a punishable offence) to 'concretise' trees. In 2000, the Central Government issued rules for de-choking trees in pavements, prescribing an area of 6 x 6 feet around each tree to be left open.

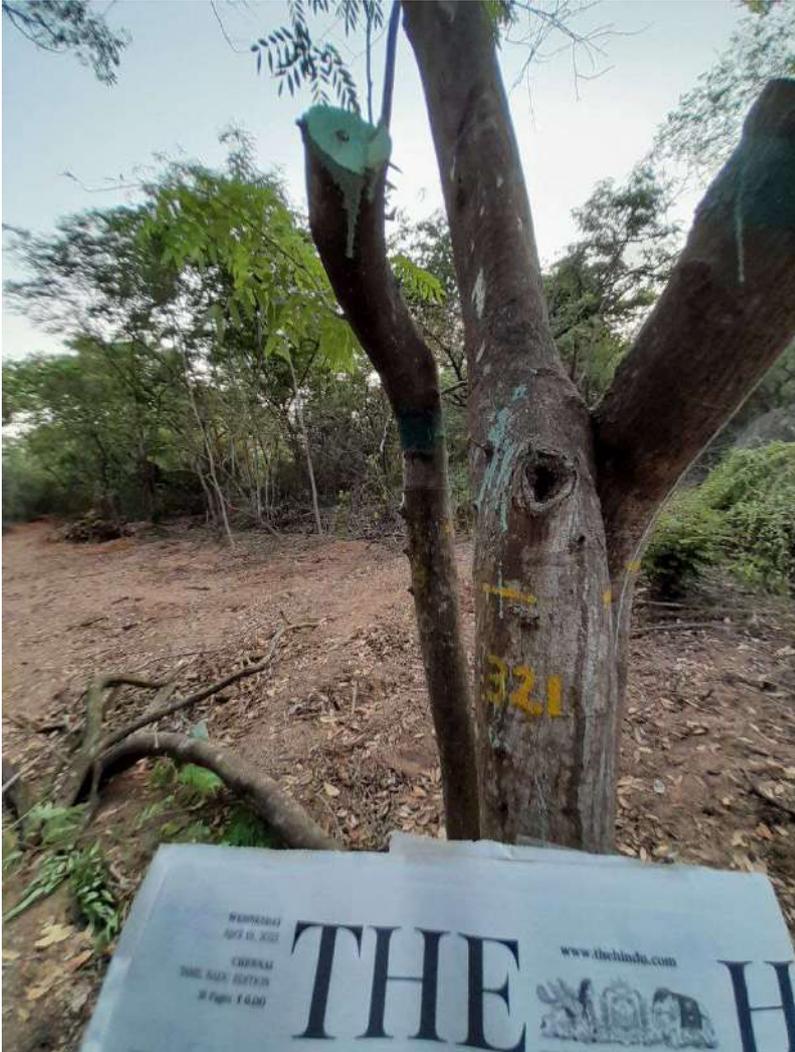
Along the Crown, there are numerous examples of saplings planted centimetres away from heavy concrete slabs and tight pavement surrounding the remaining trees in the new parking area near Solar Kitchen. **Along the Crown, 7 newly planted saplings and at least an additional 10 mature trees do not have the required area left unpaved / concreted.**





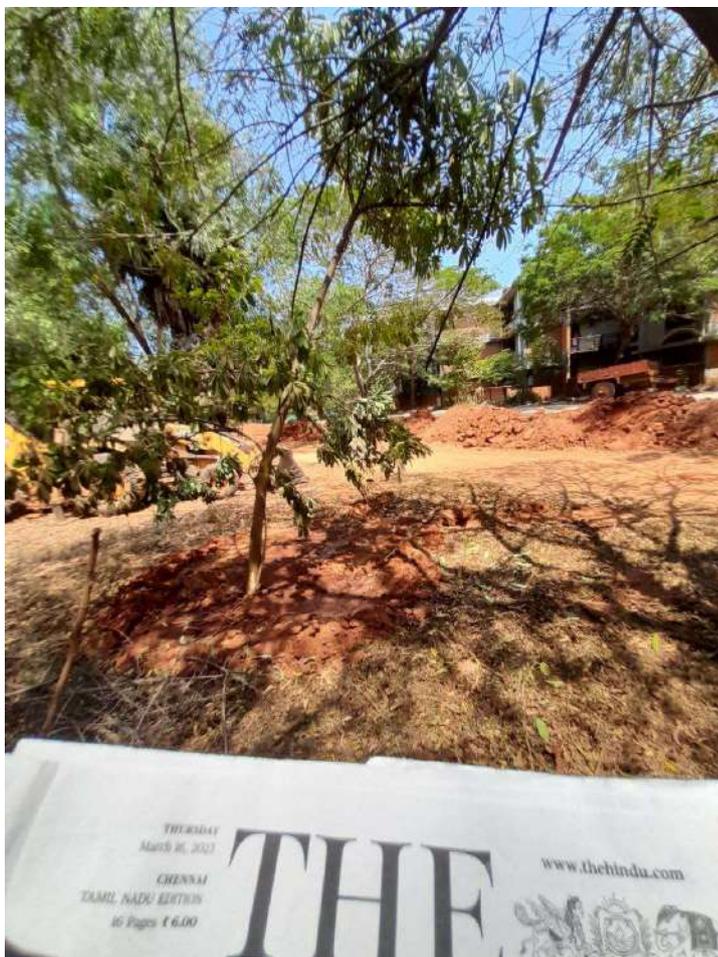
5. Damage due to 'pruning'

The percentage of a tree's leaves and branches that are necessary for it to survive hard pruning depends on species, season and other conditions. Excessive pruning will cripple or kill a tree. **A minimum of 5 trees have been cut back beyond recovery.**



6. Unprofessional & unseasonal transplanting

Details of the recent transplant of 21 trees from Darkali forest park to the Irumbai Eri area are described in a dedicated report by Satprem. **These 21 transplanted trees - and 5 additional ones from other areas along the Crown - were provided with no shade and no water point, most are already dead.**



7. Uprooted trees along the Crown

In many areas of the Crown, trees have been uprooted, among them up to 25 avenue trees planted a few years ago with the full collaboration of the then TDC and all stakeholders along that stretch.





<https://www.livelaw.in/high-court/delhi-high-court/delhi-high-court-trees-pwd-officials-sentenced-contempt-229630>

Victimization Of Trees: Delhi High Court Sentences Two Senior PWD Officers For Contempt Of Court

The Delhi High Court recently sentenced two senior officers of the Public Works Department to imprisonment after they were held guilty of contempt of court last year for not following judicial orders with regard of protection of trees. The court had earlier directed the PWD to "exercise due caution apropos all its ongoing civil works as well as for all future projects."

Justice Najmi Waziri sentenced the Engineer-in-Chief and Executive Engineer of PWD to four and two months in jail respectively, along with fine of Rs. 2000 each.

"This sentence shall be kept in abeyance for a period of ten weeks from the date of uploading the order on the court's website, so as to accord them sufficient opportunity to avail their legal remedies, as maybe available to them. Should this order not be altered or stayed, then upon the expiry of the ten weeks, the contemnors shall present themselves before the Registrar General of this court for them to be sent to judicial custody," the court said in an order passed on May 18.

The court was hearing a contempt petition moved by New Delhi Nature Society highlighting the issue of laying down of pipelines or cable lines being undertaken by BSES Rajdhani Power Limited on Bipin Chandra Pal Marg and nearby areas at Chittaranjan Park.

The society, represented by Advocate Aditya N Prasad, alleged that the work had damaged the roots of the standing trees.

It was also contended that the action was in violation of various orders of the High Court as well as the National Green Tribunal which mandated leaving of "one meter kutchra space" around the trees while undertaking any construction activity.

While holding them guilty of contempt of court in March last year, Justice Waziri had noted that the two officials disobeyed the judicial orders and the construction work on the site in question continued despite a status-quo order being issued by the court on February 25, 2022.

"The said work was being carried out on a road maintained by PWD. It was for PWD to have ensured that the work at site was stopped. It chose not to, in clear breach of the court's directions," the court had observed.

It had also noted that PWD itself had re-laid the pavements and created manholes of 6'x6' radius around 16 trees.

In the sentencing order, the court observed that despite repeated directions and orders passed by the High Court and NGT, there has been a "consistent disregard in their compliance."

"Such recalcitrance to abide by the law and defiance of the court's orders cannot merit anything less than a sentence," Justice Waziri said.

Case Title: New Delhi Nature Society v. Rajesh Bansal & Ors.



