

TO
 THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE CONSTITUTED UNDER THE ORDER
 OF THE HON'BLE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL (NGT), PRINCIPAL BENCH, NEW
 DELHI FOR CASE NUMBER 1208 / 2024

DATE: 12.12.2024

Respected Sir / Ma'am,

With due regards, I state that my name is Tejasvi Minhas and I am the applicant in OA 1208/ 2024 pending before the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal (NGT), Principal Bench, New Delhi. The Hon'ble court in its order dated 03.10.2024 had ordered the below:

Having regard to the seriousness of the allegation made in the OA, we also form a Joint Committee comprising of the representative of the Member Secretary, CPCB, RO, MoEF&CC, Chandigarh representative of PCCF (HoFF), Mohali and District Magistrate, Jalandhar who will be the nodal agency. The Committee will visit the site, ascertain the truthfulness of the allegations and the persons responsible for cutting the trees and also the mechanism existing in the State of Punjab to prevent felling of trees in the non-forest area and submit the report within a period of 8 weeks.

In the interest of justice, I would like to bring the below facts before the Joint Committee:

- 1) The case has been filed regarding the illegal cutting of 20 heritage trees that were cut illegally in the premises of Civil Surgeon Office, Jalandhar on the orders of Public Works Department (PWD), Jalandhar by a Baljit Singh, a Ferozepur, Punjab based contractor.
- 2) The Government of Punjab had ordered the demolition of the Old Civil Surgeon Office Building which was a heritage building from British Times but wasn't taken care of. This building was to be demolished to make a new 100 bedded Critical Care Unit (CCU). The demolition and construction work has to be done by Public Works Department (PWD), Jalandhar.
- 3) This complex housed some 100 – 150 years old 20 trees which can be categorized as 'HERITAGE TREES'. No environmental clearance or assessment was done to cut these trees. When city based environmentalists came to know about this, they assembled at the site to protest on 16.09.2024 at 2:30 PM. By that time, around 14 trees had be cut and chopped while 6 trees were intact. Out of these 6 trees were two of the oldest trees in the compound: 1 Peepal Tree with a girth of 484 inches and 1 Pilkhan tree with a girth of 425 inches. The other trees that remained were 1 Mango Tree, 1 Jamun Tree, 1 Sheesham Tree and 1 Banyan Tree. The work was stopped at the insistence of the activists. An immediate filing

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was done on the same day i.e 16.09.2024 with the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal (NGT), Principal Bench, New Delhi to prevent the cutting of the remaining trees. A copy of the filing was sent to the contractor Baljit Singh via Whatsapp which he received and saw. It was also conveyed to him via Audio Call that a case has been filed regarding this matter and no cutting should be done till the instructions of NGT. The information was also conveyed clearly to PWD JEE Jagatveer Singh and Office of Deputy Commissioner, Jalandhar, Dr. Hemanshu Jain. The contractor assured us that no action will be taken till the case is heard by NGT and status quo shall be maintained.

- 4) A protest was done at the site on 17.09.2024 and no cutting was done. The case filing in NGT was published by all major print media like The Tribune, Ajit, Punjab Kesari, Dainik Bhaskar and online Media Channels like Notice Board, Jalandhar, Punjab 24 – 7, PB – 8 News etc. All the activists left the site on the night of 17.09.2024 with 6 trees intact and clear assurance from the contractor that no cutting will be done till NGT hears the case.
- 5) A very big protest was being organized for 18.09.2024 against the cutting at 11 AM. When the applicant reached the spot along with many other activists, he saw that the remaining trees had been cut in the middle of the night. When we checked with the hospital staff, they told us that heavy machinery including JCBs were brought in last night to clear the land and it was done from 10:30 PM of 17.09.2024 to 04:30 of 18.09.2024. When asked, the contractor said that Public Works Department (PWD) pushed him very hard to clear the land before NGT hearing because the anticipated the applicants would get a stay and the work would be stopped.

These trees were some of the oldest trees in Jalandhar. Punjab has a forest cover of 3.67% against the National Forest Policy which required 33% forest cover. Out of this 3.67%, most of the forests are in Hoshiarpur and Ferozepur. Jalandhar hardly has any forest cover and has high levels of air, water and soil pollution. In this scenario, these heritage trees, were the lungs of the city. Public Works Department (PWD), in connivance with the contractor, made sure the trees were cut in the dead of the night so that the construction would could not be stopped and that the trees were cut before the NGT hearing. Being Government employees, Public Works Department (PWD) officials should have respected the sentiments of the citizens and the authority of NGT.

In light of these circumstances, I have requested the below relief from the Hon'ble court:

- 1) Strict action should be taken against the concerned PWD Officers, Contractor, Jalandhar Administration and Government of Punjab to allow

cutting of such 'Heritage Tree' in a criminal and clandestine manner.

- 2) All Work at the site should be stopped with immediate effect and status quo granted till the NGT hearings take place.
- 3) Direct the Government of Punjab to conduct a detailed census of all Urban Trees and assign Unique Identification Numbers to them which should have all details like tree type, approximate age, girth, height, health stats among others. This information should be made public and should be regularly updated.
- 4) Total ban on cutting of Heritage Trees (50 years and above or with a girth of 100 inches and above, depending on the variety) should be imposed in both private and public urban areas. Strict hefty fines & imprisonment rules should be formulated to deal with illegal cutting of Urban trees.
- 5) Direct the Government of Punjab to formulate and implement a strict 'TREE POLICY' like other states and UTs like Delhi. The policy should have clear laws relating to Urban Trees.
- 6) Urban Forest / Tree Cover should be drastically increased to cover 33% of the city area.
- 7) Native trees should be planted in all green zones in the city.
- 8) No pruning, cutting or any activity relating to Urban Trees should be allowed till the time proper laws are in place.

We request that immediate Departmental Inquiry should be initiated against the concerned officers. It was public knowledge that the NGT case was filed on 16.09.2024 and was covered by major print media. The filing details were also provided to the contractor and PWD. However, in a gross contempt of the Hon'ble court, the remaining 6 trees were felled in the middle of the night on 17.09.2024. This clearly proves the ill intentions of the concerned officers and vested interests.

Also, the assessment done by the Forestry Department regarding the trees is absolutely false. Value for the wood of a dead tree does not reflect even 1% of the value of a green standing tree, which has a thousand times more value than the value of its wood in the market. The Forestry department has given a very false and unscientific report which is not only very surprising, but also very unethical and misleading. A time bound inquiry should be done on how such a wrong assessment can be done. As an applicant, I am happy to pay twice the same sum to Forestry or the PWD if they can give those trees back. As a fact, they cannot give back those trees even if we pay 100 times the value, which clearly reflects how poor the assessment is. Old trees like these sell of lakhs in nurseries, however the Forestry department has its own myopic views on how to assess the value of a tree.

I would like the esteemed committee to consider the below points to assess the 'VALUE' of a tree:

- 1) These 20 trees were producing a minimum of 5000 liters of Oxygen per day. Currently 10 kg of oxygen cylinder in the market sells around Rs. 10,000. Assuming a minimum of 50 years life, these trees would have provided 250365 liters of Oxygen, the value of which is in crores.
- 2) An average tree is estimated to absorb an average of 10 kilograms of carbon dioxide per year during the first 20 years of growth. These 20 trees would have absorbed 4000 Kgs of CO₂, which probably air filters worth several crores can't do.
- 3) The tiny pores on tree leaves, the stomata, breathe in air containing toxic pollutants. Once absorbed, the gases, including pollutants such as SO₂, NO₂, CO and ozone, diffuse and break down on the inner surfaces of the leaves.
- 4) Trees remove some particulate matter from the air by temporarily capturing it on the vegetative surfaces of their leaves. When it rains, these particles are washed off the tree and transported to the soil or dissolved in rainwater.
- 5) In a concrete urban set up, especially on the road from Company Bagh to Transport Chowk, where there are no trees, these trees were the lungs for the people living around them. They were an ecosystem in themselves and were providing shelter to endless birds, insects and other organisms. People worshipped these shade providing trees.
- 6) If we give 100 times the amount of what they were sold for, PWD cannot even give back 1 tree. That summarizes how poor and unscientific the assessment is.

PWD, instead of making a building that accommodate the trees and designing accordingly, chose to cut all the trees and not make any attempt to alter the design to save the maximum number of trees possible. This is unheard of, and an absolute shame in today's world, where architects go to great lengths to save even a single tree.

Further, there are absolutely no effective laws protecting urban trees, which are in dire need of protection. Strictest possible laws should be made to protect these trees, which are our first line of defence against the rising pollution and worsening AQI. Trees are disappearing overnight and NO ACTION is being taken by any concerned authorities. We request the needful to be done on absolute priority.

I humbly request the Joint Committee to work on all the points raised in the NGT application and work towards suitable solutions which should be implemented at the earliest. Thanks!

Regards,

Tejasvi Minhas

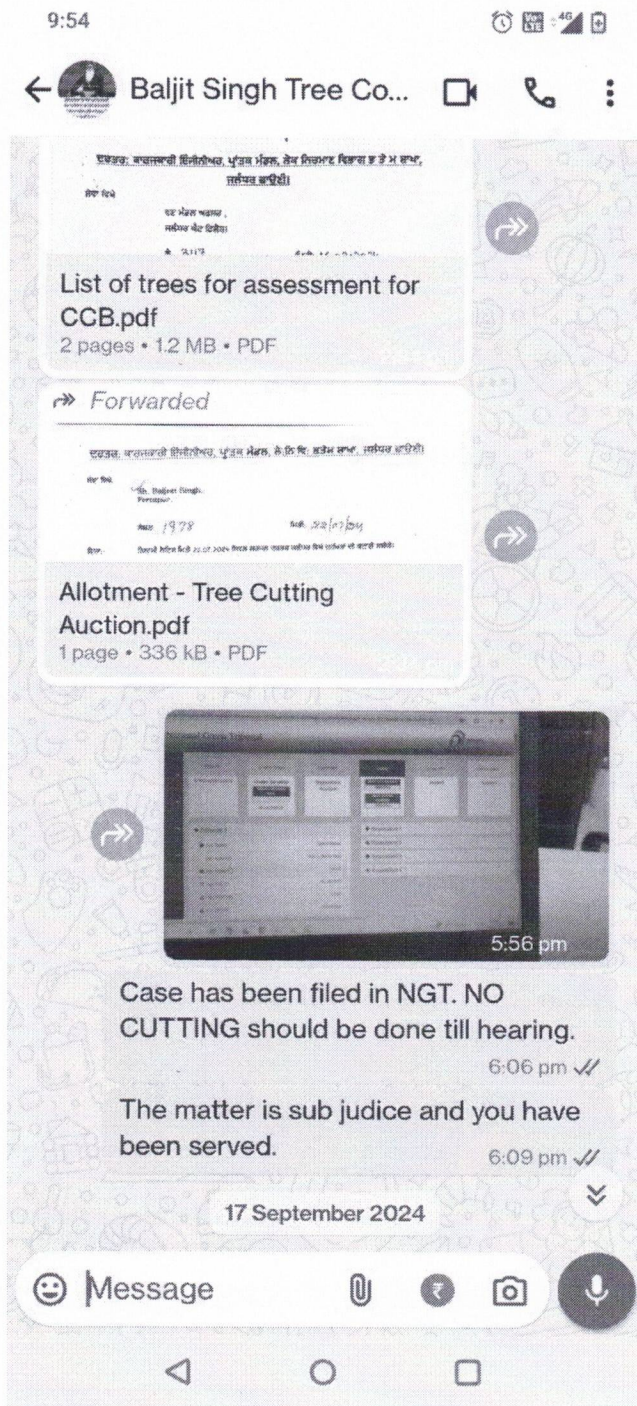


FILING NOTICE BEING SERVED TO CONTRACTOR ON 16.09.2024



A blue handwritten signature or mark.

FILING NOTICE SENT TO CONTRACTOR ON 16.09.2024 AND PRINT MEDIA SHARED WITH THE CONTRACTOR ON 17.09.2024



A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke, is located in the bottom right corner of the page.

Forwarded



Daily Samvad Punjabi
Daily Samvad Punjabi was live.
www.facebook.com

जालंधर में 150 साल पुराने पीपल और हरे भरे पेड़ काटने पर मचा बवाल, पर्यावरण प्रेमियों ने रुकवाया काम, देखें Live



<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/wLjVeQGcLt9Y1vBk/?mibextid=qj2Omg>

9:28 pm

Forwarded



9:28 pm

Message



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VoLTE 4G

Baljit Singh Tree Co...

Forw. 11 September 2024

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Punjab 24 News
ਸਿਵਲ ਸਰਜਨ ਦਫ਼ਤਰ ਕੰਪਲੈਕਸ ਵਿਖੇ ਦਰਖਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ...
www.facebook.com

<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/gPLUhMXj1AEpfDNQ/?mibextid=qi2Omg> 9:28 pm ✓

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Activists protest axing of heritage trees at CS office

9:28 pm

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YouTube

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youtu.be

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Message

NEWS COVERAGE IN THE TRIBUNE ON 17.09.2024

The election was conducted under the supervision of SDM, Jalandhar-2, Balbir Raj Singh, appointed as convener by the

Bodies minister. Singh congratulated the newly elected leaders and team of councilors. — TNS

team spotted two suspicious youths on a motorcycle at T-Point, Leather Complex.

recovered two Splendor motorcycles stolen from different places by them. He said

snatching incidents are detailed investigation into the matter was going on.

struction of Wall road

Activists protest axing of heritage trees at CS office

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APARNA BANERJI
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

JALANDHAR, SEPTEMBER 16
Environmental activist Navneet Bhullar along with her colleagues and co-activists protest felling of over 20 trees in the compound of the erst-while office of the Civil Surgeon, Jalandhar, where Critical Care Unit will come up.

Most of the trees have already been axed. The activists said they wouldn't allow the remaining five trees to be cut. They have also written to the NGT.

"Trees are carbon sequestrators, vital to biodiversity and are heat absorbers but today, on World Ozone Day, we see this carnage!" said a distraught Bhullar, a long time advocate for the ban on plastic.

The CS office premises had old mango, amaltas, jamun, neem, banyan and frangi-pani trees and the work on their cutting began about a week ago.

NGO Action Group Against Plastic Pollution (AGAPP) members Dr Pallavi Khanna, Dr Navneet Bhullar, Dr Pawandeep Singh, Dr Manmehak along with Khalsa College professors, social activist Tejaswi Minhas and youth leaders gathered to express shock at the "murder" of heritage trees.

Tejaswi said, "I have spoken with the Forest Department, which was asked to assess the trees. The PWD gave permission to cut these. But how can they? I'm approaching the National Green Tribunal today."



Environmental activists stage a protest at the Civil Hospital, Jalandhar, against tree felling.

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करेगी, फिर निगम टेंडर प्रक्रिया शुरू करेगा।

भी बढ़ेगी।

सिविल सर्जन कॉम्प्लेक्स में 100 साल पुराने पेड़ काटे, एनजीटी में केस फाइल

भास्कर न्यूज | जालंधर

सिविल सर्जन कार्यालय परिसर में क्रिटिकल केयर यूनिट का निर्माण होना है। इसके लिए 100 साल से अधिक पुराने पेड़ों को काटा जा रहा है। सोमवार को सिविल सर्जन दफ्तर परिसर में पेड़ काटने का लोगों ने विरोध जताया। परिसर के पुराने पीपल, बरगद, शीशम, जामुन, आम आदि के छायादार पेड़ काटे जा रहे हैं। पीडब्ल्यूडी ने उक्त पेड़ काटने के लिए ठेकेदार अधिकृत किया है। पर्यावरणीय प्रभाव या काटने के विकल्पों पर कोई वैज्ञानिक अध्ययन नहीं किया गया। सोमवार को समाज सेवक तेजस्वी मिन्हास और एक्शन ग्रुप अगोस्ट प्लास्टिक पॉल्यूशन के डॉ. नवनीत भुल्लर ने पेड़ों काटने का विरोध किया। उन्होंने कहा कि कुछ दिन पहले सिविल अस्पताल के कर्मचारियों ने पेड़ों की कटाई रोकने के लिए प्रदर्शन भी किया था। मिन्हास ने नेशनल ग्रीन ट्रिब्यूनल में पेड़ों काटने को लेकर केस फाइल



किया है। युवाओं ने कहा कि सिटी रेलवे स्टेशन के फेस लिफ्टिंग प्रोजेक्ट के तहत 6 करोड़ के निर्माण कार्य हुए, लेकिन कोई पेड़ नहीं काटा गया। इसी तरह कैट रेलवे स्टेशन के पार्किंग एरिया में पुराने पेड़ संरक्षित किए गए। सिविल सर्जन दफ्तर में भी ऐसा ही विचार करना चाहिए।

डॉक्टर की जगह नई भर्ती नहीं गंभीर मरीज सिविल में रेफर