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## Tree drive OK, but protect existing ones first: Greens

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We have decided to plant 2 crore trees on a single day, and not just plant, but also ensure that they sustain. All these trees will be indigenous variety

—Devendra Fadnis,  
*Chief Minister*

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Even as chief minister Devendra Fadnis announced a marathon plantation drive of 2 crore trees on July 1, environmentalists, while welcoming the move, claimed that the state was failing to protect the existing tree cover.

It was during the State Environment Day function held on Tuesday that Fadnis, raising a concern about the increasing carbon emissions and rising pollution, said trees and forests need to be protected at every cost. "We have decided to plant 2 crore trees on a single day, and not just plant, but also ensure that they sustain. All these trees will be indigenous variety," he said.

Founder of Awaaz Foundation Sumaira Abdulali said tree plantation was always a welcome thing, but the threat to existing trees in Mumbai and Maharashtra is real too. "I have highlighted how trees on the Mumbai-Goa Highway were chopped for road widening and left there; also, there are several projects threatening the trees but unfortunately nothing is being done about that. The time has come to plan road widening intelligently and protect as much green cover as possible," she said, adding that planting a crore trees could not be a justification to chop down those that are decades old.

Meanwhile, Stalin D, director (projects) for Vanashakti NGO, alleged that this was double standards by the state. "On the one hand they are talking about planting 2 crore trees, and on the other they are relentlessly pursuing to destroy the Aarey forest for Metro car shed. If the CM was so concerned about the reducing green cover and environment, he should have set an example by shifting the car shed to another location," he said, adding that the state should be more proactive towards protecting the trees that are standing.

Another activist who has been fighting with the civic body over dying trees in Mumbai said they have been writing to the corporation to protect trees, but no action was being taken nor any large-scale plantation done in the city.

"Dead trees across Mumbai are being painted by celebrities and citizens and I have written to the BMC as well as the state environment department to stop this practice," said the activist, adding that if the CM wants to protect green cover, apart from planting trees he should also ensure that strict action is taken against those felling trees illegally.


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