

UP agrees to increase forest cover in Noida Park

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NEW DELHI: The Mayawati Government on Friday expressed its willingness in the Supreme Court to provide 65 per cent forest cover in the upcoming Noida Park. Nearly 6,000 trees were cut for the construction of statues and other structures in the park by her government.

Last week, a three-Judge Bench of Chief Justice S. H. Kapadia, Justice Aftab Alam and Justice K.S. Radhakrishnan wanted to know from the Uttar Pradesh Government how many trees could be planted back, the nature and type of the trees giving their height and age. The Court al-

so wanted to know whether 60 per cent of the total of 33 hectares meant for the park could be earmarked for the park and construction confined only to 40 per cent of the total area.

Layout re-planned

In its affidavit, the State said: "It has re-planned the layout of the Noida Park and will be breaking and removing the existing paved area to the extent of 48,300 sq. m. approximately and converting the same into a green area with tree cover so that the total extent of green area would be approximately 61 per cent. The Noida authorities will also be carrying out

Amicus curiae for direction to Centre on "urban forest"

extensive plantation of suitable native, large canopy trees in an organised/scientific manner as per the guidelines and norms of the UP Forest Department."

During the resumed hearing on Friday, the Bench asked senior counsel K.K. Venugopal, appearing for the State, whether the tree cover could be increased to 65 per cent instead of 60 per cent. Counsel said accordingly the built-up and hard landscaped area would be reduced.

Earlier, senior counsel Jayant Bhushan appearing for the petitioners reiterated that the area was once a forest which had been completely wiped out and that 100 per cent tree cover in that area should be restored.

He pointed out that since the entire project had been constructed illegally without obtaining environmental clearance, it should not be allowed to be completed.

If more money was spent and construction was allowed to be completed, more damage would be caused to the environment and the adjacent bird sanctuary.

Meanwhile, the Bench issued notice to all the States

on an application from *amicus curiae* Harish Salve for a direction to the Centre to set up an expert body for defining "urban forests"; to direct the Centre to issue appropriate orders and directions under the E.P. Act to ensure that all conversion of "urban forests" to built-up spaces only after an environmental impact assessment has been duly conducted and approved by this expert body and to direct the Centre to issue appropriate orders and directions after obtaining recommendations from this expert body, which would provide guidelines for future town planning in congested urban cities.