

Mussoorie Residents Protest Felling of Trees

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The Forest Department's decision to permit the Municipal Council, Mussoorie, to cut three green trees near Jhoola Ghar in the name of beautification of the area has come under fire from local residents.

Livid at the felling of trees, advocate Ashok Malhotra said one of them was oak, another deodar and the third was a rare horse chestnut tree. He said when there had been movements across the country to plant more trees, the forest department's decision seemed uncalled for.

Hugh Gantzer, a senior citizen and member of the Supreme Court Monitoring Committee (SCMC), said since the hill town was reeling from water crisis, every single tree that's cut put it under greater stress.

The town receives water from natural springs in the forests. Trees help in recharging of the aquifers, the underground water resources which feed the springs. The town depends largely on springs and a few brooklets both of which draw their water from aquifers, he added. Residents want the forest department to explain the merit of such a decision that hasn't gone down well with them.

Mussoorie DFO Dr. Dheeraj Pandey said the Municipal Council owned the land and it had passed a proposal for expansion of Jhoola Ghar. Officers inspected the site and filed a report that the permission could be given to cut the trees under the Tree Plantation Act, 1976, as the area did not fall under the notified land clause and the Forest Conservation Act.

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