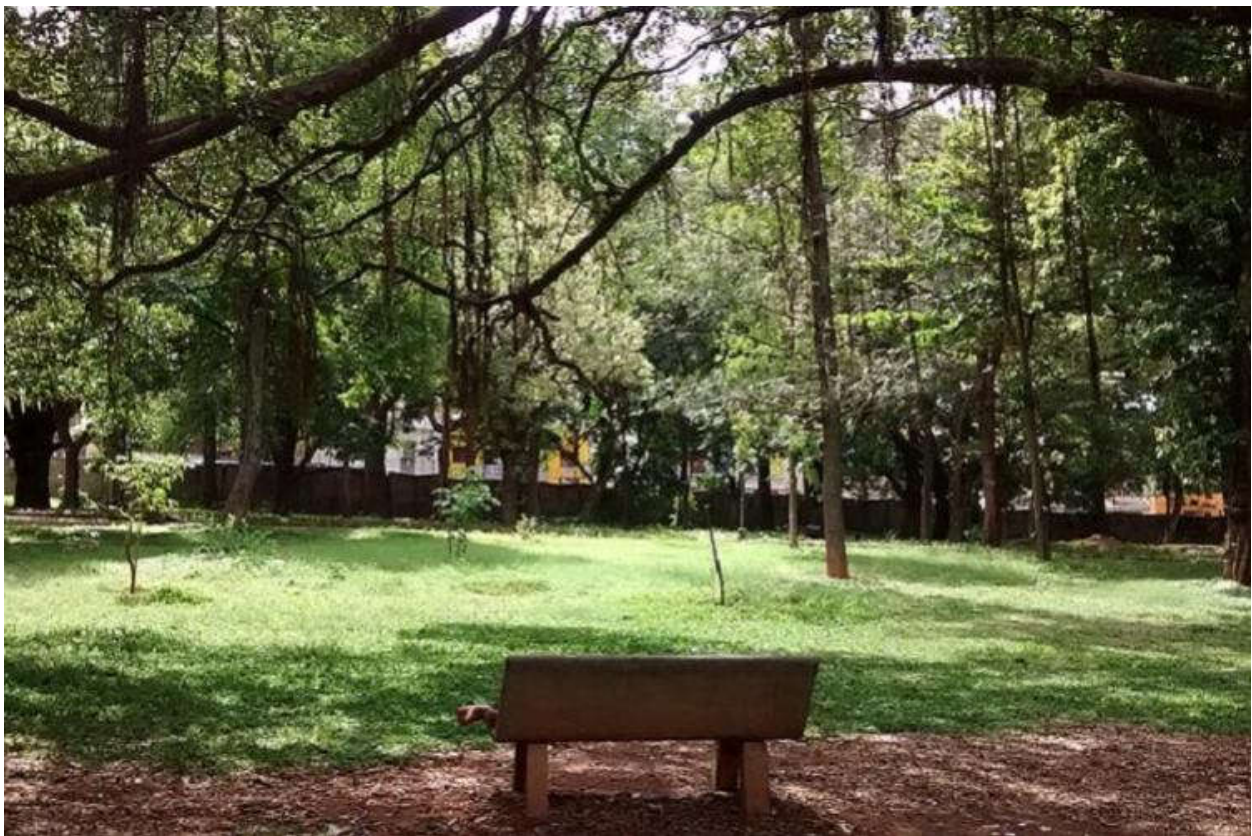


# After decades of dilly-dallying, BBMP begins tree census in Bengaluru

3 minutes

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Activists have been demanding the exercise be carried out as they allege authorities often understate the number of trees that need to be cut to make way for infra projects



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For the first time in 44 years, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has started a tree census. This comes after sustained pressure from the Karnataka High Court as part of an ongoing litigation filed by the Bangalore Environment Trust (BET).

While environmentalists have welcomed the move, they have raised questions over the process and methodology of the tree census.

Vijay Nishanth, member of the Biodiversity Board, who impleaded in the case which was originally filed by the Bangalore Environment Trust, said, "It is not clear what methodology they

are following, they have told the court that they have started it from February. We want it updated on a website in a transparent manner, right now there is a lot of confusion. We will seek clarity on April 17 which is the next date of hearing.”

Incidentally in August, 2019 the High Court had passed an order directing the BBMP to start the exercise within two weeks’ time. The BBMP had then allocated money for the exercise in successive budgets. Then Mayor Gangambike Mallikarjun in October 2018 also stated that the process will be carried out within a month.

The tree census is set to be conducted according to Section 7 (b) Karnataka Preservation of Trees Act, 1976 and is the mandated function of the ‘Tree Authority’. The Tree Authority is headed by Chief Conservator of Forest, Bengaluru Territorial Circle. The process involves enumerating the number of trees in a ward according to the species of trees.

Activists in Bengaluru have been demanding the exercise be carried out as they allege authorities often understate the destruction of green cover while clearing infrastructural project.

An Indian Institute of Science (IISc) study had shown that from 1973 to 2017, there has been a 88% decline in green spaces in the city using satellite imagery and remote sensing.

Yellappa Reddy, Chairman of BET and a former IFS (Indian Forest Officer), said. “This is not a very difficult job or nuclear science. There are highly qualified officers across the state but they are just not interested in doing it. This is just an example of the irresponsible behaviour of the bureaucracy.”

HS Ranganathaswamy, Deputy Conservator of Forest, BBMP the concerned IFS officer could not be reached for a comment.