

NGO accuses Army of cutting trees on ridge

HT Correspondent
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A CITIZENS' group has alleged that the Army and the DDA were chopping trees to construct buildings in the ridge forest near Mahipalpur.

The Citizens for the Preservation of Quarries and Lake Wilderness said on Monday that the Army was carrying out construction inside the ridge in violation of the Supreme Court order and the Delhi Master Plan.

The Army has denied the allegations. "All construction has been carried out as per the Master Plan," Army spokesperson Col Anil Shourie said. He denied trees had been cut in the area. The Army has only removed some shrubs, Shourie said.

The citizens' group took media persons to the site to show them the "rampant cutting of keekar and other heritage trees inside the ridge"

near Vasant Kunj, Vasant Vihar and Mahipalpur Southern Ridge Forest.

"They are carrying out construction when the Supreme Court judgments of May 9, September 18 and December 12, 1996 prohibit all such activity," said Vikram Soni of the citizen's group. The Army has been constructing double-storey houses for its officers.

Soni claimed the Army had cut down over 300 trees in the last three days. "They even destroyed a landmark tree, one of Delhi's oldest heritage trees," said Soni.

According to Soni, the part of the ridge was handed over to the Army in 1962 to be used as a parade ground. "This area is part of the ridge, according to Delhi's Master Plan and the Geological Survey of India report," said Soni. He has filed an FIR.

The Army said it wasn't aware of the Supreme Court order.