

## Trees cut for Holi bonfire in Bihar

Hundreds of trees have been either pruned or cut down in Bihar -- a state with a fragile 6.07 percent forest cover -- in the name of bonfires (burning of Holika) Saturday night to mark the festival of colours Sunday.

In a mockery of forest laws, people, particularly youth, from villages to small towns and cities like [Patna](#) have been felling trees in last few days.

According to Hindu mythology, bonfires are lit on the eve of Holi to signify the destruction of evil.

'We watched people in the city and its outskirts felling trees indiscriminately in the name of Holi even as forest officials looked the other way,' Arun Singh, an environmentalist said here.

Another green activist Guddu Baba said: 'Patna is a city with little green cover but people are still cutting trees. It will add to the pollution in the city.'

'People start making arrangements for a huge bonfire called 'holika dahan' or 'agja' days ahead of Holi, collecting wood by pruning big branches or felling small trees,' Guddu Baba added.

'There are over 200 places in Patna alone where bonafires will be to lit to mark the festival,' said Singh.

Rameshwar Prasad, 75, a retired government employee, recalled that till the 70s waste material was collected for the bonfires. 'We never pruned trees or cut them. Now the situation is different. People seem to enjoy cutting tress for the bonfire,' said Prasad.

However, forest officials are maintaining a complete silence despite the fact that the Bihar government has set an ambitious plan to increase the state's forest cover from the existing 6.07 percent to 35 percent, within a decade.

Forest officials admit that Bihar lost most of its green cover when the state of Jharkhand was carved out of it three years ago. Undivided Bihar had a forest cover of 17 percent.

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