

## University students stand to save green cover in Delhi

Irked by rampant felling of trees for construction purposes, students and teachers of two prestigious universities in Delhi have raised their voice to save the green cover of their campuses.

Teachers and the students of Delhi University (DU) have forwarded a petition to the vice chancellor Deepak Pental objecting to the plan to cut 1,000 trees in the north campus to construct a Rugby field for the 2010 Commonwealth Games.

Signed by 75 faculty members, the petition highlights the importance of green cover and pleads the vice chancellor to stop this move.

Asserting that nowhere else in north Delhi is such a diversity of species of trees, the petition says that they provide a respite from Delhi's gruelling heat and that the campus would not be the same without them.

Pointing out that for a sport such as Rugby that is not so popular in India, let alone the students of DU, felling of so many trees is unjustified. As an alternative, they suggest that the sprawling University ground near Vijay Nagar in the north campus itself can be used for this purpose.

The petition reminds the mass felling of putranjiva (*Putranjiva roxburghii*) and saptaparni (*Alstonia scholaris*) species of trees for university sports complex before the 1982 Asian Games was a major loss.

'Trees that take decades to mature were cut to construct buildings that have remained severely under-utilized for the last 25 years. Surely we should not repeat our mistake,' it says.

Urging the vice chancellor to take the necessary steps to curb this move, the petitioners do not accept the arguments of compensatory afforestation and reforestation.

Similarly, students and teachers of JNU are also strongly protesting the removal of trees in their campus for construction of various buildings.

In a letter to vice chancellor B.B. Bhattacharya, they said that while they don't mind development of the campus to meet its growing need, this should have a minimum impact on the green cover.

'Every plan of the University needs to be discussed by the academic community not only keeping the academic concerns in mind but also taking into account the likely impact on the environment of the campus,' the letter says.

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