

UNNATURAL COLOURS

This Gomti Nagar stretch has red, blue and green 'designer' trees!

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LUCKNOW: In a surprise move, an 'over-enthusiastic' corporator of Lucknow Municipal Corporation (LMC) has painted more than three dozen full-grown trees on the busy stretch near Viraam Khand of Gomti Nagar in red, blue and green, giving an artificial look to the trees.

The corporator's act has drawn sharp reaction from environmentalist, who called it a 'highly deplorable thing to do'. Some also said painting of the trees with chemical-based colours will badly affect their

health besides "giving an ugly look to the 'natural' trees."

However, the LMC corporator, Arun Tiwari, said the colours would add longevity to the trees. "We have hired an expert hand to paint the trees, which would also add beauty to the area," he said.

"Painting is not going to harm any tree. Instead, it will add longevity to the trees," said Tiwari, who is carrying out the tree painting from his corporator's fund.

Prior to starting the work, the corporator said he had approached the environment department that diverted him to the forest department.

"Sub-divisional officer (SDO), forest department, has given us the nod, saying it's a good act that will not only make the area beautiful but add life to the trees."

"We have hired an expert named Sunil Pardal to execute the task," Tiwari told HT.

Pardal, who has studied tree painting for the last five years, said he is first giving anti-termite treatment to the tree. "First we are injecting anti-termite into the trees. Then we are giving a primer coat that is followed by painting. We are using branded paints," he said.

He said Lucknow is not the

first place to have tree painting. "Tree painting is common in western countries, in Bhopal and some other cities of India," he added.

"We have also kept a feedback book on which more than 50 people have given their positive feedback," he added.

RN Gupta, sub-divisional officer, forest department, who gave the nod for the task, said, "I don't think that painting would harm trees in any way. In fact, the corporator told us that they would also inject pesticide and anti-termite solution to the trees that indeed would be beneficial for them. Hence, I gave my nod.

Besides, they also told us that they also had clearances from environmentalist."

Bharat Raj Singh, an environmental scientist and director general School of Management Sciences, who is a consultant in the painting work, termed the painting a beneficial act.

"We must understand the scientific process before coming to any conclusion. It's a natural process that trees take water from its roots and pass it on to the leaves. Most of the trees also have a thick bark on the stem to check water loss (through evaporation) so that

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■ The colouring work was commissioned by an LMC corporator.

DEEPAK GUPTA/HT PHOTO

Trees

complete amount of water reaches to the leaves. And now if we add paint to it, it will further check the water evaporation thus would add longevity to the tree," said Singh.

However, SK Barik, director National Botanical Research Institute (NBRI), Lucknow, said, "Certainly painting will badly affect the trees. Though the trees won't die but it will affect their ability to grow."

Venketesh Dutta, assistant professor (environmental management and planning), Lucknow University (LU) said one must not interfere in a natural process. "Similar to human beings, plants are also living beings. And it would certainly not look good if we paint our bodies. In a similar way, it's not a wise idea to paint tree stems as it would badly affect tree growth," said Dutta.

Dutta said the forest department, too, paints trees sometime to number it but it uses lime and only covers a small area. "But painting the entire stem is certainly not good as paint contains many heavy metals and chemicals that would affect trees' growth and their ability to fight diseases," he added.

**BOX
PAINTING WORK STOPPED**
Mukesh Meshram, divisional commissioner, Lucknow, said, "I have directed the municipal commissioner to stop the work at once, which is more of a wastage of the corporator's fund."