

**The Times of India**

**Title : Tree under axe to make room for `beautiful' park**

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**Be It Blatant Norm Flout Or Hackers On Prowl, Trees Across Kolkata Struggle To Stand Tall As Carnage Continues Unabated**

A 15-foot tall tree at a park in south Kolkata's Bijoygarh was mercilessly chopped down on Tuesday because the councillor felt it came in the way of his beautification plans.

The full-grown gulmohur tree, which had been planted over a decade ago on the edge of a playground opposite Bijoygarh college, was hacked around 9am without anyone objecting to it. By the time nature lover Arjan Basu Roy learned about it and rushed to the spot, all the branches had been severed, leaving only the bare trunk.

“We are planning to set up a beautiful park. The tree was a nuisance. Its branches were so weak that there was a constant risk of them falling and injuring someone. So we decided to do away with it altogether. If needed, we will plant sturdy trees like eucalyptus,” Ward No. 96 councillor Malay Majumdar said.

Incidentally, eucalyptus is planted in water-scarce regions and not in a place like Kolkata that has abundance of moisture in the soil.

Roy rued that the damage was already done by the time it reached. “There were people going about. Boys were playing in the ground. But no one seemed to bother that a tree was being felled in its prime. They don't realise that a crime is being committed. Councillors, who should really be the custodians of the environment, have no qualms destroying it citing beautification,” Roy complained.

Majumdar wasn't the least flustered when TOI asked why a tree had been felled.

“We will set up a slide and other play equipment in the park. Work has already begun in the project that is expected to cost around Rs 8 lakh,” said Majumdar.

He further said the level of the field behind the children's park would be raised by dumping more earth. We will plant grass thereafter. The drainage around the field will also be improved to prevent inundation. “With so much work being done, why bother if a tree is cut?” he remarked.

Pradeep Kakkar of NGO Public felt the councillor's perception was a great example of callousness trickling down. “Think what has happened in recent days. A large mahogany tree has been hacked down in Alipore. Eight trees have been chopped down in Panditya. And now we have a tree being cut despite it being in a park,” he said.



The tree was hacked as it had weak branches and could hurt anyone, argued the councillor