



Trees Cut Down for Proposed Kanwar Yatra Route

Why in News?

According to [the National Green Tribunal \(NGT\)](#), authorities have cut around 17,600 trees in Uttar Pradesh's **Ghaziabad, Meerut, and Muzaffarnagar districts** to make way for a new [Kanwar Yatra](#) route.

Key Points

- **Background:**
 - Earlier this year, the NGT took [suo motu cognizance](#) of a news report regarding the Uttar Pradesh government's plan to cut down 1,12,722 trees.
 - The purpose of this large-scale tree-cutting was to facilitate a proposed **Kanwar Yatra route between Muradnagar in Ghaziabad and Purkaji in Muzaffarnagar.**
- **Findings of the Interim Report:**
 - In August 2024, the NGT **established a joint panel to examine the environmental concerns** associated with this project.
 - The report, **based on data from the Irrigation Department**, highlighted that initial permission allowed for felling 1,12,722 trees, but the target was later reduced to 33,776 trees.
- The NGT instructed the Uttar Pradesh government to clarify if the calculation of trees to be cut follows the [U.P. Protection of Trees Act, 1976](#).
 - The government must also specify if **additional vegetation such as plants and bushes**, which may be removed for road construction, **fall under the Act's definition of trees.**

The Kanwar Yatra

- It is a **Hindu pilgrimage** in the **month of Shravana**, by **Lord Shiva devotees**.
- The devotees **travel to pilgrimage** places like [Haridwar](#), [Gaumukh](#), [Gangotri](#) in Uttarakhand, [Sultanganj](#) in Bihar, [Prayagraj](#), [Ayodhya](#), and [Varanasi](#) in Uttar Pradesh, and return by carrying [Ganga](#) water in kanwars to seek the blessings of Shiva.
 - The water is offered to Shiva temples, including the [12 Jyotirlingas](#) across India and other shrines like the Pura Mahadev Mandir and Augharnath in Uttar Pradesh, the famous [Kashi Vishwanath temple](#), and the [Baba Baidyanath Temple](#) in Deoghar, Jharkhand. The ritual is known as **Jal Abhishek**.

NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) is a specialised body for swift resolution of environmental and natural resource cases.

About

- ⑤ **Establishment:** By National Green Tribunal Act 2010
- ⑤ **Objective:** Quick resolution of environmental & natural resource cases
- ⑤ **Case Resolution:** Within 6 months
- ⑤ **Places of Sitting:** New Delhi (Principal), Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata, and Chennai

Structure

- ⑤ **Composition:** Chairperson, Judicial Members, and Expert Members
- ⑤ **Tenure:** Up to 5 years/until age 65 (no reappointment)
- ⑤ **Appointments:** Chairperson - Central Government (with the CJI's consultation)
 - ⑤ 10-20 judicial members & 10-20 expert members - Selection Committee

India is the third country globally (after Australia and New Zealand) and the first developing nation to establish a specialised environmental tribunal like NGT.

Powers & Jurisdiction

- ⑤ **Jurisdiction:** Civil cases on environmental issues and rights
- ⑤ **Suo Motu Powers:** Granted since 2021
- ⑤ **Roles:** Adjudicatory, preventative, and remedial
- ⑤ **Procedures:** Follows Principles of natural justice
 - ⑤ Not bound by the CPC, 1908 or Indian Evidence Act, 1872
- ⑤ **Principles:** Sustainable Development; Precautionary; Polluter pays
- ⑤ **Orders:** Executable as civil court decrees; offers relief and compensation (**decisions are binding**)
- ⑤ **Appeals:** Tribunal can review its decisions.
 - ⑤ If decision fails - Appeal to the SC to be filed within 90 days

NGT deals with Civil Cases under

- ⑤ Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974
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- ⑤ Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980
- ⑤ Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981
- ⑤ Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
- ⑤ Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991
- ⑤ Biological Diversity Act, 2002



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