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## 'DDA connived with mafia'

**New Delhi, Nov. 12:** In a strongly-worded observation hinting towards corruption in the Delhi Development Authority, the Delhi high court on Monday criticised officials of the land owning agency for conniving with land mafia and allowing encroachment of government land.

"Your officers are doing nothing but sitting in the office. Public land worth crores of rupees is being taken away and you are doing nothing," a bench comprising Justice T.S.

Thakur and Justice Veena Birbal said.

The bench was hearing a petition filed by the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation, alleging that it was unable to build a metro station in Ashok Nagar in South Delhi as 10 bighas of allotted land was under encroachment and the civic agency had failed to remove the encroachers.

"Why did you lose the land and why are you allowing the trespassers to get hold of your land. It must be due to connivance of your officials

with the land mafias," the court said warning that, if needed, it may order a CBI probe in the matter.

"There is more than what meets the eye. People involved in the matter need to be identified and firmly dealt with," the bench said, directing DDA to help DMRC get possession of the land at the earliest.

Warning that it may take strict action against officials found guilty of misconduct in the case, the bench asked, "How many of the officers are facing corruption

charges or are facing disproportionate assets case?"

"It can not happen unless the crooks are hand in glove with DDA officials. We will not spare anybody, no matter how big they are. We can not allow such plundering of public land," the court said while posting the matter to November 14 for further hearing.

The DDA was given the ownership of around 920 bighas of the South Delhi land in 1987 but it allegedly failed to take possession. (PTI)