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50 acres of mangroves destroyed in Mumbai

Linah Baliga, TNN Jun 7, 2013, 03:07AM IST

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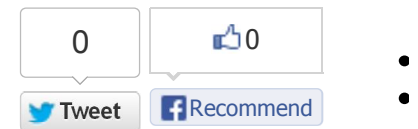
MUMBAI: Around 50 acres of mangroves were allegedly destroyed in Lokhandwala by planting "invasive species" and creating a debris path, which residents claimed was a new modus operandi to kill the green belt.

The residents were shocked to see the mangroves destroyed and charred bushes on both sides of the path on May 23. The whole belt had been declared a "forest and wetland" and its destruction or damage attracts severe punishment.

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The tehsildar said that despite the highest tide of the month on May 23, no sea water entered the area, resulting in the death of mangroves.

"Blocking tide water into the inter-tidal wetlands and planting different types of vegetation that are not found in wetlands, after dumping debris, is a technique used to convert coastal regulatory zone (CRZ-1) land into areas with development potential," said Stalin D of the Vanashakti NGO.

The residents lodged a police complaint when they noticed almost 300kg of tree branches bundled together.

"A nursery was first created adjacent to the road. Then a path was created to dump debris and pave the way for construction. This was also done to distort satellite imagery, which shows mangroves at the site," said Ashoke Pandit, chairperson of the Oshiwara Lokhandwala Citizens' Association (OLCA).

"The authorities must immediately swing into action and ascertain who will benefit directly from the land due to the large-scale destruction of mangroves. The violation of environment is the most serious of crimes and strict action and prosecution measures are laid out for the perpetrators, who will benefit," said Sumesh Lekhi, member of OLCA, which has complained to chief minister Prithviraj Chavan, the forest department, ministry of environment & forests, collector and civic authorities.

How it was done

An eight-foot wide L-shaped debris path was created from Versova lagoon to Jaswant Singh Chandok Circle to block sea water from entering the area.

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