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World environment day: From marine mammal deaths to sand mining, 6 issues Mumbai faces

Mumbai city news: On world environment day, an advisory body to the government, identified the top 6 environmental issues Mumbai faces

MUMBAI (HTTP://WWW.HINDUSTANTIMES.COM/MUMBAI-NEWS/) Updated: Jun 05, 2017 10:26 IST

Badri Chatterjee (http://www.hindustantimes.com/columns/badri-chatterjee)
Hindustan Times

EPRI found that the average waste generated by each person in the city is 0.6 kg, which is much more than the state pollution board guideline of 0.48kg.(HT)

All is not well in Mumbai. The city continues to reel from a cocktail of environmental problems with issues coming up every day.

On World Environment Day, Environmental Policy Research Institute (EPRI), a think tank and advisory body to the government, identified the top six environmental issues that the city faces this year — solid waste management, noise pollution, destruction of trees, poor water quality, air pollution and urban heat islands.

Also, HT identifies other issues such as mangrove, wetland and salt pan destruction cases, marine mammal deaths and sand mining, which has been plaguing the Mumbai Metropolitan Region over the past two years.

“There are environmental issues in every household that most people are not aware of, such as the indoor air quality and the amount of light entering homes. Then there are the major environmental issues that Mumbai faces. It is necessary to take steps at the macro and the micro levels. Policies should be implemented as these problems will only increase,” said Avick Sil, regional director, EPRI, adding that similar to a development plan, Mumbai needs a five-year environment plan.

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40-ft whale washes ashore in two parts at Juhu and Madh in Mumbai (http://www.hindustantimes.com/mumbai-news/40-ft-whale-washes-ashore-in-two-parts-at-juhu-and-madh-in-mumbai/story-iOjPjaxotw9JWCVN9P9OHK.html)

45-ft whale largest mammal to wash ashore in Mumbai (http://www.hindustantimes.com/mumbai-news/45-ft-whale-largest-mammal-to-wash-ashore-in-mumbai/story-eGvDxwW2iXCpFAfoUYB0TK.html)

EPRI found that the average waste generated by each person in the city is 0.6 kg, which is much more than the state pollution board guideline of 0.48kg. Noise levels range between 72-80 decibels (dB), coming from traffic and construction noise, one of the highest in India. If these levels continue, it could lead to hearing loss, according to a World Health Organisation estimate. Development has taken the driver’s seat — trees are felled without consideration; destruction of mangroves, wetlands and saltpans continue unabated.

Moreover, the increasing population and vehicles is taking water and air pollution to levels much above safety standards. Insufficient treatment facilities for sewage and inadequate action plans for cleaning the city’s air adds to the problem. All these problems are summing up to increase the temperature of the concrete jungle, which

is significantly warmer than its surrounding areas.

Environmental watchdogs said that on an environment quality index, Mumbai fares very poorly on all fronts. “Mumbai today sits in a position where it faces multiple challenges in environmental safety. Despite this alarming situation, the government still has not woken up, nor has the desire to address these issues,” said Stalin D, director, NGO Vanshakti.

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World environment day: Mumbai lost 60% of its green cover in 40 years (http://www.hindustantimes.com/mumbai-news/40-years-of-development-cost-mumbai-60-of-its-green-cover-65-of-water-bodies-study/story-ySgLLxkoNbBALP3u28X9TI.html)

Coastal Road project: Mumbai to lose mangrove cover equivalent to 4 Oval Maidans (http://www.hindustantimes.com/mumbai-news/coastal-road-project-mumbai-to-lose-mangrove-cover-equivalent-to-4-oval-maidans/story-H5mCqmfPB1jVO5FxuCKXOL.html)

“The impact of these problems can be clearly seen with the rise in temperatures with every summer and it has started affecting the monsoon pattern as well,” said Godfrey Pimenta, trustee, NGO Watchdog Foundation. “A grim future stares at us, with negligible trees and a city lost in rubble if these concerns are not addressed soon.”

Some citizens have taken things into their own hands and changed their circumstances. City-based lawyer Afroz Shah has rid Versova Beach of 5.5 million kg trash in over 87 weeks. On Sunday, the eve of World Environment Day, Shah and another 2,000 Mumbaiites (school, college children, bank officials, civic body officials, private industries, celebrities and many others) got together to remove 1.6 lakh kg of garbage from the beach and planted 500 trees there. “The laws are all in place for each environmental problem but lacks enforcement. The solution lies only with citizens to take it upon themselves to change the city,” said Shah.

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Environment ministry allows MMRC to cut 1,000 mangrove trees at BKC, Dharavi for Metro 3 (http://www.hindustantimes.com/mumbai-news/environment-ministry-allows-mmrc-to-cut-1-000-mangrove-trees-at-bkc-dharavi-for-metro-3/story-pcxKrCmkgmGtuSMjwlVfRM.html)

New-age Chipko: Mumbaiites climb peepal tree to ‘save’ it from being hacked for Metro-3 (http://www.hindustantimes.com/mumbai-news/new-age-chipko-mumbaiites-climb-peepal-tree-to-save-it-from-being-hacked-for-metro-3/story-vThHgkHiNzH1c8MnL6FS4O.html)

Experts said action plans were needed for every kind of environmental problem in each sector. “The city needs to develop sustainability goals and action plans for each sector and achieve them in time. There are too many problems and they cannot be ignored. Also, there has to be a stringent monitoring and oversight system to check them,” said Anumita Roychowdhury, executive director, in-charge of sustainable cities programme, Centre for Science and Environment (CSE).

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), India, told HT that a metropolis like Mumbai is the only city where there is a healthy engagement between the government and the citizen. “The major issue that the city faces is the lack of enforcement of existing laws. However, the government and citizens are working in tandem to find solutions. We have examples like the Versova beach. The spirit should not die down,” said Vijay Samnotra, UNEP India head.

State officials said that beyond all basic issues, the city needs to preserve its trees. “There are action plans for every issue, right from solid waste management, air, water and noise pollution. But if the green cover of the city is lost, it dents the overall environment condition,” said P Anbalagan, member secretary, Maharashtra Pollution Control Board. “Trees are lungs of the city and we need to create more of them. The municipal corporation has been told of quality plantation and it will be an overall solution for major environmental issues in Mumbai.”

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Three marine animal carcasses wash ashore at Juhu, 13 cases in 2017 so far in Mumbai (http://www.hindustantimes.com/mumbai-news/three-marine-animal-carcasses-wash-ashore-at-juhu-13-cases-in-2017-so-far-in-mumbai/story-19XufHCPorjlpBzlAwCKZI.html)

More than 1,000 illegal structures on mangrove area in Mumbai razed (http://www.hindustantimes.com/mumbai-news/more-than-1-000-illegal-structures-on-mangrove-area-in-mumbai-razed/story-c8lAYfiDjTtPOPJVapNUdJ.html)

Found dead, along the state’s coast

In the first five months this year, 16 marine animal carcasses washed ashore along Mumbai’s beaches.

Over the past two years, the carcasses of close to 60 dolphins, six whales and a few finless porpoises have been spotted along the Mumbai and Maharashtra coast due to unknown reasons.

Mangroves are threatened

Mumbai has witnessed 80 cases of mangrove destruction — 74 on private land (under the revenue department) and six on government land (under the forest department) between January and April. No arrests or convictions have been made. Environmentalists alleged that almost half of the city's wetlands, right from Malad, Marwe, Gorai, Borivli, Kandivli, Kalwa, Kasheli, all the way up to Uran is under developmental threat.

"With global warming and imminent rise in sea level, removal of mangroves will only enhance vulnerability of the region to the vagaries of climate. Mangroves act as shields and aptly known as walking plants and they move towards ocean increasing land area.

But, removal of mangroves would lead to the ocean taking over land surface," said professor TV Ramachandra, head, Energy and Wetland Research Group, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru.

Sand mining: 1 year, 72 cases

Sand mining is a major environmental concern which may threaten the existence of over 70% of the world's beaches, according to the United Nations. Mumbai has recorded 72 cases of sand mining between April 1, 2016 and March 31, 2017. Rs 3.4 crore has been collected as fine in criminal cases and royalty submitted for illegal sand mining.

It contributes to land erosion, compromise in water security, affecting climate and many more such fatal calamities.

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Trees chopped for Metro projects dumped at Mumbai mangroves, says NGO (http://www.hindustantimes.com/mumbai-news/trees-chopped-for-metro-projects-dumped-at-borivli-mangroves-says-ngo/story-moW33Nix919Efmi8PkVmQL.html)
World environment day: Mumbai civic body rids Mithi river of toxic foam, hyacinth after HT report (http://www.hindustantimes.com/mumbai-news/ht-impact-mumbai-civic-body-rids-mithi-river-of-poisonous-white-foam/story-ZyOOyp7rdRuPsneV0KU91K.html)

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