

Maharashtra: Environmentalists alert authorities over fresh destruction of mangroves in Uran

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In a fresh case of destruction of mangroves in Uran, as many as 2,500 sea plants have been killed in an aggressive landfilling exercise allegedly by Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT). Environmentalists have complained about the suspicious activity to the Bombay high court-appointed mangrove committee. The landfill, according to the environmentalists, is located at Dhutum village, off NH-348, an area that belongs to JNPT.

“Mangroves at this place are significant as there are several projects such as IOT on the other side of the highway. Since the dumping work is in progress in the mangroves, the project management should have taken permissions from the state coastal zone management authority and high court. We have also complained to chief minister Uddhav Thackeray and environment minister Aaditya Thackeray,” said BN Kumar, director of non-government organisation NatConnect Foundation.

Environmentalists have expressed concern over no official questioning the Dhutum work, even though it is being done in broad daylight.

Navi Mumbai-based green organisations like NatConnect, Shri Ekvira Aai Pratishtan and traditional fishing community forum Paaramparik Machhimar Bachao Kruti Samiti have requested the high court-appointed Mangrove Protection and Conservation Committee (MPCC) to intervene at the earliest and halt the landfill.

The organisations observed that the site has no signboards of the project and the burial of mangroves has been continuing day and night, and that an estimation of about 2.5 to 3 hectares has been covered by the dumping.

Nandakumar Pawar, head of Shri Ekvira Aai Pratishtan, said that till date, none of the project proponents have ever put up any signboard across Uran while destroying the mangroves or wetlands. “Obviously, there is something amiss. This landfill is apparently illegal and is also the continuation of the modus operandi of project proponents (be it JNPT or NMSEZ) to engage local contractors and later disclaim any responsibility for the environmental crime,” he said.

Environmentalists alleged that destruction has been in full swing the entire 2020 as the surveillance officials were away on Covid-19 duty. They also alleged that, with the long weekend, such work at places like Dhutum is in full swing.

Stalin Dayanand, environmentalist and member MPCC who is set to file a petition in the high court on Tuesday, said, “We had proposed to all the project proponents that a proper board be put up on the site indicating the nature of work, permissions obtained, survey number and all necessary details so that it is known that no illegal work is going on. However, in Uran, no site has a board put up. The collector of Raigad has done absolutely no work in past two years to protect wetlands or mangroves. She has not filed a single FIR, instead her juniors have done so. Filing of FIRs by anyone below the collector holds no importance in the court. There has neither been any prosecution nor restoration of mangroves by the collector.”

SOURCE:- <https://www.hindustantimes.com/environment/maharashtra-environmentalists-alert-authorities-over-fresh-destruction-of-mangroves-in-uran/story-WrwpOBCIUFBhUPVd8UT6hM.html>