

Maharashtra notifies 121 ha of mangrove area in Palghar as forest land

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Maharashtra has notified around 121 hectares (ha) of mangrove area in Palghar as forest land under the Indian Forest Act (IFA). It will be included in the state's reserved forest area of 16,700 ha.

In a gazette notification on February 5, the government announced that the 121.78 ha will be handed over to the state forest department. Earlier, on January 13, 1,388 ha of mangrove area in Thane was notified as forest land.

Virendra Tiwari, additional principal chief conservator of forests and an ex-officio executive director of the state Mangrove Foundation, said the land has been notified for the conservation of the mangroves.

The state Mangrove Cell has also notified 1,509 ha in Palghar and 502.95 ha of mangroves land in Kurla as a reserved forest for conservation. A gazette notification to this effect was issued last Wednesday.

"These are lands that were already with the Cell. They were already notified as reserved forest under section 4 of IFA. Due process was followed to check for any claims on the land by the district administration. This is the final notification so that there are no claims on these lands, and they are reserved forests, soon to be handed over to the forest department," Tiwari said.

On January 12, the state notified 1,575.16 ha of mangrove lands along the state's coast. This is in line with a Bombay High Court order directing the government to hand over all mangrove areas on the government land to the forests department for better conservation.

In 2005, in an interim order, the court issued the direction. The court reiterated its order in September 2018.

District bodies are yet to hand over 1,592.8 ha area, while state agencies have failed to transfer approximately 1,147 ha to the forest department.

This month, Vanashakti, an environmental group, filed a petition in the court seeking immediate transfer of all mangrove lands to the forest department.

Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news>