

**Maharashtra: 1,575 hectare of mangrove land along Konkan coast declared reserve forest**

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Across the state, mangrove forests are spread over 30,200 hectare, according to the Forest Survey of India.  
(Representational)

The state forest department and its mangrove cell on Thursday declared 1,575 hectare of mangrove areas along the Konkan coast, including 253 hectare in Mumbai suburbs, as a reserve forest.

The 253 hectare in Mumbai are spread across Versova, Andheri, Kandivali, Dahisar and Gorai.

Also, the state government invoked Section 4 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927, intending to declare as reserve forest 1,387 hectare of mangrove land in 49 villages of Thane, taking the state's reserve forest tally to 16,700 hectare.

Announcing the development, Environment Minister Aaditya Thackeray tweeted, "In less than a year, the Mangrove Cell in coordination with the Forest and Environment department has reserved 6500 hectares of mangrove area under Section 20 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927. This area will increase to 10,000 hectares by next June."

Across the state, mangrove forests are spread over 30,200 hectare, according to the Forest Survey of India.

As of last September, the state government had notified 15,312 hectare as reserved forest under the Indian Forest Act.

In September 2018, the Bombay High Court had said that the destruction of mangroves "offended the fundamental rights of the citizens and hence, it was a mandatory duty of the state and its

agencies to protect and preserve” them. All mangroves in the state are to be declared as protected or reserved forests, including the land belonging to government agencies, it had added.

Mumbai has one of the largest mangrove cover in the country, acting as a bio-shield against extreme weather, regulator of land-based pollution and very effective mechanism to contain flood.

It also acts as a nursery ground for many species of fish in their juvenile stages and a habitat for birds, reptiles, mammals and invertebrates.

In a meeting held last September, Thackeray had directed district collectors along the Konkan coast to identify and transfer mangrove land under their jurisdiction to the forest department within two months so that these could be declared as reserved forests.

Last October, the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation had written to the mangrove cell seeking the transfer of around 700 acre of mangrove land and creating the city’s first mangrove forest.

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