

'Complete Mangroves Survey In 4 Weeks': HC To CIDCO

03 July 2024



The Bombay High Court has directed the Maharashtra government to conduct survey and physical verification of mangroves falling within the jurisdiction of City and Industrial Development Corporation (CIDCO) within a maximum period of four weeks. If the order is not complied with, the court has said it will be constrained to require the presence of some higher officer in the Revenue and Forest Department to ensure compliance.

The HC was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) petition filed by the non-governmental organisation Vanashakti in 2021 seeking compliance of the orders passed by the high court on September 17, 2018, wherein it directed that the mangrove areas that are on government-owned lands will be handed over to the Forest Department within 12 weeks from the declaration of the same as “protected forests”

The state has approximately 32,000 hectares of mangrove area. Of these, 16,984 hectares are now legal forests, and require clearance under the Forest Clearance Act (1980) to be diverted for any non-forestry purpose. The mangroves area is protected as a legal ‘forest’ under the Indian Forest Act (1980).

These mangrove areas are owned by various state authorities and also private persons. On Monday, Vanashakti’s advocate Zaman Ali informed the court that almost all other departments have complied with the earlier order and transferred land with mangroves to the forest department, except CIDCO. The Navi Mumbai planning authority is yet to transfer 685 hectares of mangrove land.

Government pleader MM Pabale, on instructions from additional principal chief conservator (Mangroves Cell) SV Ramarao told the court that the process of survey is underway and would take approximately two months. Disputing the claim, Ali said if a CIDCO officer visits the mangrove sites then, with the help

of drones, can complete the survey within two days. The court, however, granted four weeks to CIDCO to complete the survey and submit a report.

“In case the order is not complied with, the court may be constrained to require the presence of some higher officer in the Revenue and Forest Department for ensuring compliance of this order,” a bench of Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya and Justice Amit Borkar said while keeping the matter for hearing on August 5.

Source: <https://www.freepressjournal.in/mumbai/complete-mangroves-survey-in-4-weeks-hc-to-cidco>