

Forest dept to focus on mangrove protection through MISHTI scheme

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Mangaluru: The forest department will focus on the conservation of mangroves in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts through the MISHTI scheme of the Union government.

Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes (MISHTI) envisage to comprehensively explore the possible area for the development of mangroves covering approximately 540 sq km, spreading across 11 states and two union territories during five years, starting from 2023-24 onwards. The sharing of best practices on plantation techniques, conservation measures, management practices and resource mobilisation through public-private partnership are objectives of the MISHTI scheme.

According to estimates, Karnataka's mangroves in the three coastal districts account for 12.61 sq km and represent 0.26% of the country's mangroves. The largest tract is in Uttara Kannada district at 10.47 sq km, followed by Udupi at 1.69 sq km and Dakshina Kannada at 0.45 sq km.

Speaking to TOI, deputy conservator of forest (DCF), Mangaluru division Dr Dinesh Kumar YK said that mangroves provide essential habitat for thousands of species.

"They also stabilise shorelines, preventing erosion and protecting the land and the people. However, in several areas, the mangroves have been under tremendous pressure because of dumping and encroachment on river bank," the official said.

“Our aim is to restore and conserve the mangroves. Mangrove plantation will be undertaken in three locations—near Paradise Island, Permanur and Jeppinamogaru. Along with that, we will undertake planting on more than 15 acres. Availability of land is the biggest challenge,” he added.

Mangroves are beautiful, magical forests that protect shorelines and prevent damage caused by strong winds, waves, and floods, an officer said, adding that about five patches near the Ullal-Talapady areas are being closely watched.

“However, they need to be conserved because they prevent erosion by stabilising sediments with their tangled root systems. They maintain water quality, filtering pollutants and trapping sediments originating from land. Mangrove serves as valuable nursery areas for shrimp, crustaceans, molluscs, and fishes. There are a few patches near Sasihithlu,” he said.

In Udupi, World Environment Day will be observed by planting mangroves at Kodi of Kundapur, under the MISHTI scheme.