

Maha forest department conducts study on mangroves

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In what will help launch a crackdown on illicit felling of mangroves, the state forest department will soon generate results of the first such study on the anatomical properties of mangroves. This will also create a scientific repository of these mangrove species for posterity.

“The anatomical properties of tree species are different. This study will generate a repository from which wood seized in cases of illicit tree felling can be tested, compared and verified based on the anatomical properties. This will help the forest department curb illicit cutting of trees,” said a senior official from the state mangrove cell. He added that mangroves were felled for encroachments and also for using the wood as firewood and biomass, especially in rural areas.

The academic and scientific study is being conducted by the Institute of Wood Science and Technology, Bengaluru, and the final report is awaited.

The official said that Maharashtra had around 20 reported species of mangroves, of which around five, like *Avicennia marina*, *Sonneratia alba*, *Sonneratia apetala*, and the species of the *Rhizophora* genus were dominant.

Each species has certain anatomical properties which can be determined based on volumetric studies and cell arrangements under microscope.

The official added that the study would create a repository of scientific data for posterity and help generate knowledge.

The complex root systems of mangroves dissipate sea waves energy protecting coastal areas from tsunamis, storm surges and soil erosion. They also enhance sediment deposition and prevent coastal

erosion. Mangroves serve as a breeding ground for fish and aquatic eco-systems and are carbon sinks. However, they are often targeted by land sharks, illicit hooch brewers and encroachers.

Maharashtra has a 720-km coastline. According to the India State of Forest Report-2019 by the Forest Survey of India, Maharashtra's mangrove cover has been estimated at 320.27 sq km, of which Mumbai city and the suburbs have 2 sq km and 64.30 sq km respectively. Maharashtra accounts for 6.44% of India's 4,975.22 sq km mangrove cover.

Mangroves form 1% of tropical forests in the world or 15 million hectare and are distributed over 123 countries.

Source: <https://www.freepressjournal.in/india/maha-forest-department-conducts-study-on-mangroves>