



## **Mangrove destruction to be viewed seriously: Rane**

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Panaji: Forest minister Vishwajit Rane on Wednesday said that several cases of mangrove destruction have come to light in the state. He said that many complaints have been received by the forest department in this regard and that acts like dumping of garbage and filling up of mangrove areas will be viewed seriously.

Rane said that awareness about importance of mangroves to the coastal ecosystem is lacking, which is leading to mangrove forests in the state being neglected or destroyed. Destruction of mangroves is an offence under the Goa Preservation of Trees Act, 1984, and any such acts will attract strict action from now on, said the minister.

On Wednesday, Rane, along with senior forest officials, inspected the dying mangrove patches along the national highway on the Mercers-Santa Cruz route. Forest officials were instructed to investigate the cause for the mangroves dying in this area and to take measures to regenerate the trees.

In recent years, highway expansion work was taken up on the Mercers-Santa Cruz stretch, following which the mangrove forest patches along this route were seen turning blackish and dying. Recently, a group of artists had also set up an installation art project here to highlight the plight of the mangroves.

“This land belongs to the comunidade, and we will be informing them to be alert and intimate us of any such cases of destruction of mangroves in their areas. We will also ask PWD to open up the blocked channel of water to the mangroves,” said Rane.

He said that he has given strict instructions to the forest officials to identify the cause of deterioration of the mangrove forest and to take action against those involved in disturbing the health of this coastal ecosystem.

The previous day, Rane held a meeting with range forest officers and discussed measures to revamp the department. “They made several suggestions during the meeting, and I have assured them that I will look into it. We will have meetings once a month to understand the progress we need to make with regards to our forest cover and also to understand the difficulties faced by the officers,” Rane said.

He said that a five-year roadmap will be drawn for the forest department to achieve its vision.

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