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# Mumbai: Plan to reclaim mangrove belt lost to debris dumping

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MUMBAI: In perhaps the first such move to reclaim mangrove belts that have been lost to debris dumping over the last three decades, the Mangrove Foundation, Mahapreit, a state-owned renewable energy company, and the BMC will undertake an experimental project to re-establish the lost mangrove zone in P North ward (Malad-Malvani). This belt, officials said, has vanished after being buried under debris dumped by encroachers in the late 1990s.

“A thorough survey of the debris dump is being conducted across the mangrove belt of Malad-Malvani with the help of an NGO, the Environmental Research and Action Foundation (ERAF). The initial rounds of the survey have suggested that 98% of the debris cannot be recycled. The 13 pockets of the dump here are being inspected to get an idea of

how much of the mangrove area is affected and how it can be restored,” Virendra Tiwari, additional principal chief conservator of forest, Mangrove Cell, said.

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According to Tiwari, the agreements with Mahapreit (Mahatma Phule Renewable Energy and Infrastructure Technology Ltd) and the NGO were signed earlier this year. After identifying the types of debris at these locations and the strategies to remove them

and reclaim the land, the experimental project will begin in Malad. Depending on the results, remaining dumps will be brought under the project in a phased manner.

At a recent meeting to discuss the pilot project, ERAF director Ajit Kumar Jain referred to the urgency to conserve mangroves in the light of the recent climatic changes observed across the country and the abnormally high sea water level rise, as pointed out in the World Meteorological Organization report. At the same meeting, Mahapreit CMD Bipin Shrimali announced that similar projects would be undertaken in Ratnagiri and Palghar districts.



The issue of removing debris from mangroves had been pending in the Bombay high court since 2005. The forest department was instrumental in repeatedly taking up the need for rejuvenating these mangrove belts that are dying due to illegal dumping. As per a 2018 HC order, the BMC is responsible for the debris removal.

Meanwhile, as part of the project, it has been proposed to build make-shift chowkies in these zones to keep vigil on mischief makers.