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Maharashtra CM asks forest department to look into Panje wetland mangroves chopping

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NAVI MUMBAI: Following multiple complaints regarding the illegal hacking of mangroves at the Panje wetland in Uran, chief minister Uddhav Thackeray has directed the state forest department to look into this issue. The revenue department officials will also be inquiring into the matter, along with the forest department. The greens have welcomed the move and urged the authorities to effectively stop further degradation of nature.

"We received a communique from the CM's office on Sunday stating that the secretary of forest department, Milind Mhaikar, will be looking into the grave issue of illegal cutting of mangroves at Panje. Hopefully, the environmental destruction should stop

now at least in order to save the wetland which is also a bird rich region," said the director of the NGO NatConnect Foundation, BN Kumar.

Environmentalist Debi Goenka of Conservation Action Trust (CAT) said: "It is shocking that the mangroves at Panje are being illegally cut despite several complaints lodged with the state authorities in the last few days. This shows that certain vested interests are hellbent on grabbing the land. The forest department and the Bombay high court mangroves protection panel must take tough measures in this case."

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Navi Mumbai: Member calls HC appointed wetlands protection panel toothless for failing to stop mangroves destruction

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NAVI MUMBAI: In a surprising move, one of the 20 members of the HC appointed wetlands grievance redressal committee, D Stalin, has formally apologized to the greens lobby trying to protect the mangroves at Panje in Uran. Stalin has openly stated that the wetlands panel has almost become "toothless" since most of their orders and directions to protect and preserve wetlands go unheeded on ground zero, resulting in brazen hacking of more mangroves, as is now observed at Panje. This, he added, is contempt of court.

"With the new Konkan division head, A B Misal, taking charge of the wetlands panel, I urge him to also question why the MCZMA

(Maharashtra coastal zone management authority) has not attended a single meeting of the wetlands committee in last four years, despite clear court directives. However, MCZMA did recently discuss the proposal to construct a 270 metre long wall at Panje to block tidal water. I have already argued that this proposed wall is unnecessary because the local Panje village is 14 metres above on a hillock, and hence there is no danger of flooding," said Stalin.