

Printed from

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Draft DP proposes mangrove safaris

TNN | May 29, 2016, 11.05 PM IST

Mumbai: The revised draft development plan (DP-34) has proposed mangrove safaris in environmentally sensitive areas and jogging tracks running parallel to rivers (nullahs) and creeks in two decades.

Anticipating public opposition for disturbing eco-sensitive areas, municipal chief Ajoy Mehta stated that it will be done only after securing environment clearances and detailed impact studies of the areas are done. Civic officials said the plans were to keep encroachers away from such areas and help citizens to see the biodiversity of mangroves in natural habitats.

"It's a good idea to make such areas accessible to the public as it will ensure the area is safe and free of encroachments. Jogging tracks along rivers in the city is also a positive step. Mhada is making it possible at Juhu with our assistance. There will be a mechanism to keep the water clean. The government agency had completed half the work," said film-maker and activist Ashoke Pandit. He is also the point person to bring 15 citizen groups together—Apna Mumbai Abhiyan—to fight against the civic authorities' other proposal to disturb mangroves and greenery at Aarey Colony and mangroves for a Metro car-shed.

The DP-34 has also proposed boardwalks in mangroves and trekking facilities for visitors, which it said, are permissible as per notifications issued by the ministry of environment and forest. It stated that pathways in some mangroves can be developed for people to walk. These will serve a double purpose of keeping a watch on mangroves so that they are not encroached upon and it will also be an exhilarating experience to walk along their edges, it added.

The revised DP has also proposed buffers on either side of major nullahs, creeks and some other areas. The general width of the buffers will be six metres and they will be pedestrian walkways.

Mangroves are vulnerable areas along the city coastline easily encroached upon by slum-dwellers. Sometimes, businessmen

and politicians encroach upon sensitive areas after destroying mangroves for personal use. The civic authorities avoid paying attention to encroachment complaints in mangrove areas, as those properties belong to Mhada.

The Juhu nullah's development was designed by architect P K Das and funds from Javed Akhtar's MP fund were used.