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Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation puts up fences to save green cover in Digha

NAVI MUMBAI: The civic body has approved the erecting of fences to ward off encroachment around the green patch on the 1km-stretch from Digha junction to Mukand bus stop.

The Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) had received complaints that slum dwellers have been cutting down trees and hanging their clothes at the green patch on the dividers. The civic body had repeatedly asked the slum dwellers to not uproot saplings and cut trees to make space, but to no avail.

TOI had reported last week that the civic body had made huge investments to plant ornamental trees on the dividers as part of its beautification drive.

"Slum dwellers have made this particular patch ugly by hanging clothes on the shrubs planted on road dividers," said an NMMC official. "Except for this portion, we have been successful in maintaining green cover all along the 15-km Thane-Belapur road," he said.

The official added that since both the sides of the road are densely populated with slums, it was a problem that was bound to occur.

"Fencing was the best option to prevent errant dwellers to hang clothes on the dividers, so we asked for funds to erect them," he added.

The civic officials had pitched the idea of a fence a month ago but the "seniors delayed the project".

The fencing will take a week to complete, after which the civic body gardeners will replant saplings that have been uprooted. Digha: Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation's (NMMC) garden department and engineering wing in-charge of maintaining beautification of Thane Belapur freeway finally made budgetary provision to save the green patch spreading over a kilometer from Digha junction to Mukand bus stop. The stretch has apparently lost its green cover, owing to rampant encroachment of local dwellers who had been using the trees for drying clothes. The civic body had splurged huge money in creating the green zone, but in vein. Thanks to dwellers nearby who did not even spare the saplings.

On TOI report published a few weeks ago about rampant destruction of ornamental trees and green stretch along the road dividers at Sathe Nagar and Ram Nagar near Digha on Thane Belapur corridor, civic body swung into action to put up fencing to thwart local slum dwellers from encroaching trees for drying clothes. NMMC has started work on erecting steel fencing on the dividers to get rid of the social disorder when it failed to change the mindset of people here after a round of interaction with the locals.

"Slum dwellers painted this particular patch ugly with clothes covering green patches on road dividers. Except for this portion of road dividers we have been successful in keeping developing and maintaining the green cover all along the 15-km TB road. Both the sides of the road here are densely populated with slums. Saplings and grown up trees have been victimized as the dwellers turned this into barren land. We took serious note of this issue and appropriated a budget to fence the area," said an official.

NMMC's green city initiative to beautify the road dividers with ornamental plants had faced a major setback near this slum pockets which will now retain the greenery. "Fencing was the best option to prevent errant dwellers on the dividers. After the work is completed in a week's time we will replant the barren portion and depute gardeners here to guard and maintain its green cover. Proper maintenance mechanism will put in place," said an official.