

HC seeks reply on amendment to Trees Act

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Panaji: In a significant order, the high court of Bombay at Goa has asked the forest department to file an affidavit on a writ petition filed challenging the controversial 2016 amendment to the Goa Preservation of Trees Act.

A joint petition, filed by Prajal Sakhardande and [NGOs Goa For Giving and Vanashakti](#), included newspaper clippings that highlighted that there have been instances of coconut tree felling even after the 2016 amendment.

The petitioners stated that the amendment to the act violates the right to livelihood of a large number of persons who rely on the agriculture economy. "The wanton destruction of coconut trees will render a large number of persons without employment. It will also detrimentally affect numerous other stakeholders in the rural agricultural economy," the petition stated.

There will be an adverse effect on livelihood of coconut pluckers, toddy tappers, coconut water sellers, small-scale industries involved in coconut-related produce, as a result of the reduction in coconut trees, the petition pointed out.

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The petition has sought a high court direction to the government "to declare that a coconut tree is a tree under the Goa Preservation of Trees Act, 1984, and declare the controversial amendment unconstitutional and void".

The petitioners were represented by senior counsel Navroze Seervai who was assisted by advocate Vibhav Amonkar. The next date of

hearing has been fixed on June 13.