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Managing coastal resources

R. Sivaraman

IFS officers discuss innovative strategies at workshop



The workshop was designed to provide holistic view of the management of marine biodiversity.— Photo: T. Singaravelou

Indian Forest Service (IFS) Officers of the coastal States discussed innovative strategies to tackle the impact of climate change on coastal and marine areas at a workshop here on Wednesday.

Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy (IGNFA), Dehradun, is implementing the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project which aims building capacity of IFS officers working in coastal areas. The workshop was organised as part of this project.

The workshop is designed to provide holistic view of the management of coastal and marine biodiversity through classroom discussions, field visits, sharing of experience and documentation of good practices followed in various States. Thereby, the participants gain knowledge and skill to manage the coastal resources efficiently.

The coastal zones represent diverse eco-systems and support highly productive habitat such as mangroves , mudflats and other marine species. India has a coastline of 7,500 km which is intersected by rocky outcrops and shores with stretches of sandy beaches. It supports over 25 per cent of population in the country within 100 km of the coastline.

A concept note from the workshop said the coastal zones are being subjected to enormous pressure owing to anthropogenic and socio-economic factors. Besides that, erosion and accretion, inundation due to rise in sea level , shifting of shoreline caused by natural forces and man-made constructions also affects biodiversity.

The note also said that efficient management of coastal and marine areas is essential to safeguard the well-being of people who are depending on these resources and associated biodiversity. The Forest Department, being the custodian of wildlife in the coastal and marine areas and implementing agency for coastal regulation zone provision in various States, should strengthen its capacity to manage these resources effectively.

Speaking at the workshop, Chief Minister N. Rangasamy said, “The importance of mangrove forests and coastal plantations in minimising sea erosion is a well-known fact. Therefore, sustainability of these fragile eco-systems should be our primary concern.”

Dwelling on coastal ecosystems and climate change issues, S. Senthil Kumar, associate professor of IGNFA, mooted innovative means for coastal restoration and monitoring such mangrove engineering, reef restoration and sea grass restoration.

He said, “Reef restoration is essential to capture more carbon dioxide which is present in the atmosphere. All the States should plant more reefs to mitigate damage caused by climate change.”