

2.11. Environment and Forests

Environment

2.11.1. The survival and well being of any nation depends on sustainable social and economic progress that satisfies the needs and aspiration of the present generation without compromising the interest of future generations. Environmental conservation is an integral part of the socio-economic development but due to population explosion and increasing industrialization, a serious challenge has been posed to the preservation of our terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Conservation and enhancement of life support systems like land, water, forests and biodiversity are important for ecological balance. During the Tenth five year plan period several initiatives have been taken by the Government for pollution abatement in rivers and lakes besides promoting environmental consciousness among the school children and the public at large. These initiatives will be continued during the Eleventh Five Year Plan also.

2.11.2. The important goals/ objectives for the State's Tenth Plan were protection of environment and reduction of waste at source besides enforcement and monitoring, conservation and enhancement of life support systems like land, water, forests, bio-diversity, ocean and the atmosphere. To achieve those objectives, the following activities are undertaken for protection of environment:

- ? The National River Conservation Programme of abatement of Pollution in 5 Polluted stretches of River Cauvery in Tamil Nadu, Tiruchi, Erode, Bhavani, Kumarapalayam and Pallipalayam at an over all project cost of Rs. 3627.75 lakh is being implemented since 1996-97. This is a centrally sponsored programme.
- ? The Chennai City River Conservation Project is implemented to intercept sewage outfalls joining the Chennai City Waterways viz. Coovam, Buckingham Canal, Adyar, Otteri Nullah, Captain Cotton Canal and Mambalam drain. The project is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, being implemented since 2001 at an estimated cost of Rs.49152 lakh.

- ? The National Lake Conservation Programme is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme for environmental upgradation through bio-remediation of Ooty and Kodaikanal Lakes. This is undertaken at a total cost of Rs.688 lakh.
- ? The National River Conservation Programme for seven new towns is also implemented at a cost of Rs.57530 lakh for cleaning river Cauvery, Vaigai and Tamiraparani along the seven towns namely Tiruchy-Srirangam, Thanjavur, Kumbakonam, Karur, Mayiladuthurai, Madurai and Tirunelveli.
- ? Palar River Conservation at Ambur - A novel project, the first of its kind in the State has been prepared for Ambur Municipality for diluting the treated industrial effluent containing high Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) with treated domestic wastewater at an estimated cost of Rs.25 crore.
- ? In order to strengthen environmental consciousness among students, a National Green Corps has been launched in 4500 schools, located in all districts. During 2006-07, action has been taken to enhance the schools from 4500 to 7500 in the State. On the whole, over 3.00 lakh school children have been covered under this programme.
- ? To create environmental awareness among the school and college students, 1200 Eco-clubs have been formed in all the districts of the State. Environmental exhibitions, seminars, workshops are conducted every year at district level through Eco-clubs.
- ? An Environmental Information System (ENVIS) Centre has been commissioned in the Department of Environment under the World Bank supported project called Environmental Management Capacity Building Technical Assistant Project of Government of India. The Department of Environment has been identified as a State Node for the Environmental Information System.
- ? An Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan (ICZMP) is being prepared for the coastline of Tamil Nadu at a cost of Rs. 2.50 crore.
- ? The Coastal Vulnerability maps are being prepared at a cost of Rs. 2.00 crore.

? Preparation of a State of Environment Report, State of Environment Atlas and State of Environment photo / video catalogues is under progress with the financial assistance from Government of India.

Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board:

2.11.3. The Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board is enforcing the provisions of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 (a Central Act), the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act 1981 and the various Rules framed under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

2.11.4. The Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board has been monitoring industries and plays an important role in the establishment of Common Effluent Treatment Plants (CETPs), management of solid wastes, monitoring of vehicular emission, water quality etc. and increasing environmental awareness.

2.11.5. The Board has prepared the environmental plan for Chennai City. The Board is implementing spatial environmental planning programme for preparing district environmental address in respect of Thiruvallur, Kancheepuram, Coimbatore, Vellore and Thoothukudi.

Plan Outlay for 2007-08

2.11.6. The agreed outlay for Environment sector is Rs.16.38 crore for 2007-08.

Forest

2.11.7. Forestry is the most natural and sustainable form of land use providing ecological security to the country as a whole and complements all other forms of land uses. The forests conserve water, soil and stabilise the environment. Sustainability of forest eco-system is an essential component of the environmental conservation efforts. Any degradation of forests will have an adverse impact on various systems such as water resources, agriculture, bio-diversity, environment, climate and human health in the communities living in and around the forest areas. A vast section of the rural society, including a majority of the tribal, are dependent on forestry sector for their sustenance and well being. The food and livelihood security

of a vast population abutting the forests may be jeopardised, if the forests are not sustainably managed. The success of agriculture and rural prosperity is dependant on a harmonious rural landscape with sufficient tree cover. Forests and tree resources inside and outside the forests provide enormous goods and services to the people and the State. Therefore, this sector has aroused the interests of all sections of the society in the State.

Extent of Forests

2.11.8. The Forest Department is the custodian of 22,877 sq.kms. of forest land, which constitute 17.59% of the geographical area as against 33.33% required under National Forest Policy, 1988. Nearly half of the forest area is subjected to heavy degradation on account of biotic pressure. Various schemes and programmes of Government are aimed at restoring the degraded forest and expanding forests outside the Reserve Forest area.

Forest Policy

2.11.9. The forests of Tamil Nadu are governed by National Forest Policy 1988 and the Tamil Nadu State Forest Act 1882. The Wild Life Protection Act 1972, Forest (Conservation) Act 1980 and a host of Rules formulated under these Acts are being implemented by the Forest Department. Various landmark judgements given by the courts emphasizing the importance of preservation of forests have raised people's expectations in the implementation of the forest policy. Launching of State Forest Policy in tune with the National Forest Policy is in the final stage of consideration. The principal aim of the National Forest Policy, 1988 and the State Forest Policy is maintenance of environmental stability and restoration of ecological balance through conservation, upgradation and increase in the forest cover. Forests in Tamil Nadu are being managed with the following main objectives:

- ? Increasing substantially the forest/tree cover in the State;
- ? Ensuring environmental stability and restoration of ecological balance;
- ? Conservation of bio-diversity for the benefit of present and future generation;

- ? Mitigating floods and droughts and also retarding situation of reservoirs by checking soil erosion and denudation in catchment areas of rivers, lakes and reservoirs;
- ? Meeting the genuine requirement of fuel, fodder, non-wood forest produce and small timber to the extent possible on a sustainable basis (through Joint Forest Management);
- ? Extension of improved forest technology to farmers for creating alternative sources of forest produce outside the Reserved Forests;
- ? Improving the habitat for all living being including micro organisms, insects, birds and animals;
- ? Making available the traditional forest produce to be used rightfully by the tribal people living inside forests;

2.11.10. In order to meet the objectives, various strategies are planned as detailed below:

- ? Increasing green cover.
- ? Biological upgradation and ecological restoration through Joint Forest Management.
- ? Special Area Management of fragile eco-systems of Western Ghats, Nilgiris, Coastal Mangroves and Marine areas.
- ? Management of Sanctuaries and National Parks.
- ? Catchments Area Management.
- ? Forest Protection.
- ? Production Forestry.
- ? Forestry for Tribal development.
- ? Extension Forestry.
- ? Community Forestry.

Eleventh Five-Year Plan Approach:

2.11.11. The National Forest Policy has emphasised the need for bringing 33% of the land area under forests / tree cover by 2012 in the country. The forests and tree cover in the State is presently 21.25%. The task ahead is stupendous and calls for radical approaches in our planning strategies for the 11th five year plan. While we plan for more agricultural growth,

industrial progress, employment generation and prosperity, this should be so done, without in any way disturbing the quality of the State's unique natural wealth.

2.11.12. Ecology in economic decision making has to be an essential element of the 11th five year plan approach. Population growth affluence and technology should at no cost deplete the natural capital. Therefore, substantial investment in the management of forests and ecosystems is the critical need of the hour. It is necessary to discuss strategies for collecting green taxes, on the polluter – pay principles, ecological tariffs etc., as away to generate income and also utilize a sizable portion of this income for sustainable management of the natural resources.

2.11.13. Adequate investments for the maintenance of forests is essential in the evidence of growing threats, to forests on account of global warming, concentration of green house gases, carbon - dioxide built up, due to economic activities and the threat on climate change. There is significant possibility in increasing agricultural productivity in the state through sustainable farming practices in the state, if tree cultivation is included as a practice. There is also need to invest more in watershed management as a per capita use of fresh water is increasing rapidly due to population increase. Forestry and tree cultivation has been an integral part of traditional agricultural practices in the state. This needs to be supported for increased output from the farm lands coupled with marketing support for the farmers and also establishment of tree based rural industries for rural prosperity. Hence there is a need to take into account the total economic welfare of the people in the state which can come through not only through industrial development but more through conservation and augmentation of the natural capital ie. the forests.

Plan Schemes for the Year 2007-08:

2.11.14. The major on-going programmes / schemes proposed for the year 2007-08 outlined below.

Externally Aided Programmes:

2.11.15. Tamil Nadu Afforestation Project (Phase-II)(JBIC assisted):

During 2007-08 the Tamil Nadu Afforestation Project (TAP) scheme will be implemented in 230 forest fringe villages including 40 tribal villages covering an extent of 51500 ha. of degraded forests at a cost of Rs. 11522 lakh.

2.11.16. Emergency Tsunami Reconstruction Project (World Bank assisted):

Vegetation along the coast is sparse and confined to patches of mangroves and plantations of casuarinas. The past experience and the experience during the present Tsunami revealed that the forests protected the villages. It is therefore necessary to undertake intensive rehabilitation programme to raise the tree cover all along the coastal area through artificial regeneration by developing and expanding the existing shelterbelt plantations and mangrove. During 2007-08, it is proposed to carryout the maintenance works for the shelterbelt and mangrove plantations raised earlier at a cost of Rs. 202.92 lakh

Biodiversity Conservation:

2.11.17. Nature conservation: The development of National Parks and Sanctuaries will be taken up during 2007-2008 at a cost of Rs.123 lakh.

Special Area programmes:

2.11.18. Hill Area Development Programme : The Hill Area Development Programme is being implemented for eco-restoration in the Nilgiris. This Programme is proposed to be implemented during 2007-2008 with an outlay of Rs.445.01 covering an extent of 250 ha.

2.11.19. Western Ghat Development Programme: The Western Ghat Development Programme is proposed to be implemented during 2007-2008 with an outlay of Rs. 428 lakh to treat an extent of 1100 ha.

Community Forestry:

2.11.20. Community Wasteland Development Programme(tank foreshore plantation): Karuvel Plantations in tankbeds are proposed to be taken up over an extent of about 2880 ha.during 2007-2008 at a cost of Rs.994.65 Lakh.

Production Forestry:

2.11.21. Teak Plantations are proposed to be taken up in river Padugais at a cost of Rs.573.08 lakh to raise plantation in 3280 ha. during 2007-2008.

Forestry Research:

2.11.22. Different Schemes will be implemented during 2007-2008 at a cost of Rs.205 Lakh.

Tribal Development:

2.11.23. Various programmes will be implemented during 2007-2008 with an outlay of Rs.160.99 lakh.

Centrally Sponsored Schemes:

2.11.24. Project Tiger The Project Tiger is implemented in Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve of Tirunelveli district. During 2007-08, an amount of Rs. 60 lakh is proposed for the above project.

2.11.25. Project Elephant The Project Elephant is implemented in 10 districts. During 2007-08, an amount of Rs. 168 lakh is proposed for the above project.

Forest Conservation and Management:

2.11.26. Forest Conservation and Management schemes for Mangroves is proposed with an outlay of Rs.176.00 for the year 2007-2008.

2.11.27. Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve programmes The Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve is the oldest Biosphere Reserve of the country covering an area of 5526 sq.kms. During 2007-08, an amount of Rs. 60 lakh is proposed for the above Programmes.

Infrastructure development :

2.11.28. Forest maintenance works as per the recommendations of 12th Finance Commission will be taken up at a cost of Rs.595.25 lakh during the year 2007-2008.

Shared schemes:

2.11.29. Integrated Forest Protection programmes are proposed to be implemented during 2007-2008 with an outlay of Rs.600 lakh.

Plan Outlay for 2007- 08:

2.11.30. The agreed outlay for 2007-08 is Rs. 173.26 crore for Forest sector. Of this, an amount of Rs. 34.65 crore and Rs.2.65 crore is set apart for Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP) and Tribal Sub Plan (TSP).