



15th -31st October 2006

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1. **Spotlight on mangroves and coral reefs**

The Indian Express dated September 15th 2006 reported that “A national committee meeting on the protection of mangroves and coral reefs was organised here recently. Top officials from the Union Ministry of Environment and Forest and wild life officials from various States participated. District Collector Tenkasi S Jawahar said that many parts of the district escaped the fury of tsunami only due to the mangrove forest cover in coastal areas. All efforts had been made to protect the forests in the coastal belt of the district with the active participation of the people.

Stating that Tamil Nadu had a coastline of about 1,076 km, the collector said Nagapattinam district had a 187 km long coastline. It stretches from Kodampalayam in the north to Kodiakarai in the south with the district accounting for about 15 per cent of the total length in Tamil Nadu. Major mangrove wetlands in Vedaranyam- Muthupet stretch of Nagapattinam – Thiruvarur districts. Mangroves survive tidal extremes, strong winds, high temperature and muddy soil. Mangrove forests are regarded as the most productive and bio-diverse eco system, the Collector added.

Veena Upadyaya, Joint Secretary, Union Ministry of Environment and Forests, spoke on the objectives of meeting. B S Parsheera, Additional Secretary, Union Ministry of Environment and Forests, spoke on steps taken to protect the mangrove forests throughout the country. Sukhdev Chief Conservator of Forests, Tamil Nadu, welcomed the gathering. Senior forest officials from Karnataka,

Andhra Pradesh and Orissa, Nagai wildlife Warden Venkateshwaran and other took part.

2. Govt Scholarship for Sportspersons

Indian Express dated October 23rd 2006 reported that District Collector Tenkasi S Jawahar has announced that students studying in schools, colleges and Universities could apply for scholarship from Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu (SDAT). In a press release the Collector stated that the SDAT was awarding scholarships to encourage brilliant sports persons studying in various educational institutions. Students who have excelled in All India level sports events are eligible to apply for the scholarship. Selected school students would get an annual scholarship of Rs.5000 while college and University students would be given Rs.6500. Eligible students could obtain application forms from the District Sports office at Nagapattinam.

3. Women's role highlighted

The Hindu reported on the 25th October, 2006 that "Rural Women have a major role in creating a hunger free self-reliant rural community said L.Antonysamy, chairperson of Centre for Education and Alternatives (CEDA) trust. Addressing the Rural Women's Day and World Food Day celebration organised by Karaikal Women Movement in the Union Territory of Puducherry here, Mr.Antonysamy said that the women in the rural areas were contributing more for the development of the societies by actively working in the agriculture sector in terms of food production apart from their domestic work. However their contribution to the society has not been recognised, he said. He also added that the rural women should be given priority in terms of food and health care in the five year plans and in the budget allocation.

A.Backim, Director, CEDA Trust, explained the various tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction activities being carried out in Karaikal district, Ms.Backiam said that the rural women should start a movement for creating a hunger free society.

4. Infrastructure development in tsunami – hit villages

Hindu dated 25th October 2006 reported that Pudukottai : The Indian Red Cross Society and the Canadian Red Cross Society have sanctioned an assistance Rs.3.29 crore for implementing livelihood recovery and infrastructure development projects in the tsunami affected coastal villages of Pudukottai district. The programmes are aimed at economic empowerment of fishermen and fisher women by improving their means of livelihood, said J.Raja Mohammed., honorary secretary, district branch of the Society. Economic assistance will be given for the purchase of the nets and boats and construction of individual toilets, net mending centres, drying yards and community buildings.

5. District administration to plant 40 lakh saplings

On the 25th October 2006, The Indian Express reported that District Collector Tenkasi S Jawaharlal has said that the district administration has proposed to plant 40 lakh saplings in five years. Speaking at a plantation campaign organised by the Isha Yoga Centre, Nagapattinam the Collector appreciated the efforts of the volunteers of the centre who undertook a massive drive to plant 7 lakh saplings on a single day in Tamil Nadu recently. As part of proposed plan, sapling would be planted during the current year by the district administration said the Collector. He also pointed out that coastal plantation offered the highest protection during tsunami and steps had been taken to raise coastal shelter belt in the coastal areas.

6. NSS volunteers to the help of mentally challenged

On the 26th October 2006 the Hindu, the National Service Scheme and Community Polytechnic Scheme units of Srinivasa Subbaraya Polytechnic College at Puthur near Sirkazhi recently conducted ‘ Mental Health Act awareness’ programme as a part of the Works Mental Health Day in association with Sirkazhi Taluk Legal Services Centre. Sornam J Natrajan, District Munsif, who delivered the key note address explained the aspects of the Act and how should be used to protect the rights of mentally challenged persons. P.Boopathy Principal of the college presided over the college.

7. Institutional reforms vital for equitable water distribution

The Hindu dated October 26th , 2006 reported that To ensure access to safe drinking water for all, it is necessary to introduce operational, financial and institutional reforms, besides improving resources management that will lead to conservation and avoidance of wastage, according to Gayatri Sharma Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development.

The problem plaguing water supply is not just inadequate resources but that of better management of assets and efficient utilization of water available and regulation. Artificial recharge of the ground water table, rain water harvesting and recycling of waste water are some ways to tackle these challenges, she said delivering at an international conference on challenges and strategies for sustainability of drinking of safe drinking water at Gandhi gram Rural University.

8. Plan to protect shelters from natural calamities

Hindu dated 27th October 2006 reported that “Non governmental Organisations (NGOs) entrusted with talk the task of constructing permanent shelter for tsunami victims in the coastal areas should ensure quality said the Collector Tenkasi S Jawahar. He said that a special committee had been formed to monitor the quality of construction. An NGO that did not follow the Government norm in the construction of 29 permanent houses in Vadaku Poigainallur was warned and was asked to use the best quality materials.

He also said that about 50 NGOs were entrusted with the work of constructing 16,829 permanent houses in 76 locations in the coastal belt for providing them free to tsunami victims of which 1878 houses had already been completed and handed

over to the beneficiaries too. More than 10000 houses are under different stages of construction. The construction of all the houses are expected to be over by March next year, he said that some NGOs were taking special interest in providing more amenities in the permanent houses being built by them. He said that all precautionary steps were taken to provide protected drinking waster supply, uninterrupted power supply to 8,243 temporary shelters at 48 locations. Special committees had been formed to protect temporary shelters from monsoon rains and cyclone.