

ENVIRONMENT AND FOREST

As per report on State of Forests (2001) of the Forest Survey of India 84 % of the 8249 sq.km. of geographical area of Andaman and Nicobar Islands is under forest cover. Out of this about 86% is recorded forests. Of the total recorded forest area of 7171 sq.km., about 2929 sq. kms. (40%) is under Reserve forest and balance 4242 sq. kms. (60%) under Protected forest.

The main activities of the department are conservation, protection and sustainable development of Forests and Wildlife. These functions are carried out through implementation of various forestry programmes on conservation, biodiversity including Wildlife, Silvicultural research, utilization of forest resources on sustainable principle, capacity building and extension including creation of environmental awareness and enforcement of statutory provisions of National Forest Policy, 1988. Indian Forest Act, 1927, the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 including the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification of 1991 .

Direction, Administration and Management of Forests:

All the remote areas of these islands need to have protection staff at strategic points along with suitable communication network and as such it is proposed to procure 44 VHF sets including fixed station, mobile sets and hand handle sets during the current financial year. It is also proposed to establish a GIS cell for better interpretation of remote sensing data and their digital image processing.

Silviculture and Forestry Research:

The main objectives are biodiversity assessment, monitoring, identification and establishment of seed production area of important species, evolving standard nursery technique for raising quality planting materials, collecting growth data of important species, evolving techniques for regeneration of mangroves.

Natural Regeneration and Enrichment of Forests:

The scheme envisages regeneration of Forest area harvested through the process of aided natural regeneration to maintain and improve productivity of Forest area. Regeneration of tropical forests of these islands is done under a . Silviculture system called. "Andaman Canopy lifting shelter wood System" which involves tending of advance growth of economically important species through canopy manipulation as well as planting in the gaps till young regeneration gets established.

Forest Settlement and Consolidation:

The scheme envisages survey, demarcation and settlement of Forest land. The physical survey and demarcation of forest area on the ground is carried out and consolidation of forest boundary is done by erecting concrete boundary pillars.

Forests Resources, Survey and Working Plan:

As per direction of Hon'ble Supreme Court all the working plans of the territorial divisions need to be revised. Accordingly a committee has been constituted with two experts as member of the Committee to rewrite the working plans of all 6 (Six) territorial divisions. The draft working plan for South Andaman is already submitted to the Hon'ble Supreme Court and preparation of Working plan in respect of Middle Andaman and Mayabunder is under preparation.

Harvesting and Development of Non-Timber Forest Produce:

Availability of Non timber forest products, viz, cane, bamboo etc for domestic consumption as well as for small scale industries is becoming scarce with increase in demands. These non-timber forest resources are required to be regenerated by undertaking plantation of the same. During the year it is proposed to take up cane and bamboo plantation over an area of 470 ha.

Social Forestry, Agro-Forestry and Extension Forestry:

The main objective of the scheme is to promote extension of tree cover beyond the conventional forest area and to educate the masses about the need for conservation and protection of the Forest and Wildlife. It is envisaged to

extend forest cover by promoting /raising plantation of fuel wood, fodder and fruit bearing trees by farmers on their own lands as well as community land etc.

Forests Utilisation:

The departmental timber extraction is funded under this scheme. Tree felling in Andaman and Nicobar Islands is banned with effect from 10th October, 2001 as per the order of Hon'ble Supreme Court. Fresh extraction of timber will be undertaken on receipt of approval by the Supreme Court.

Communication and Buildings:

The Forest Department of Andaman and Nicobar Islands has its activities spread over the entire territory, covering some of the most remote and far-flung islands. The workers and the staff posted in such islands have to be provided with basic facilities like housing etc. and therefore the department proposes to construct various types of residential accommodation/office buildings in the remote area under the scheme.

Bio-diversity and Wildlife Conservation and Eco-Development:

These Islands are very rich in bio-diversity having a variety of flora, fauna and genetic resources, which need to be protected and conserved as natural heritage. It envisages protection and development of national parks/sanctuaries all over the islands and creation of infrastructure viz V.H.F communication, speed boats etc. so as to effectively protect the territorial as well as Marine ecosystem from threat by various biotic factors. The Forest Department is also implementing a major project on construction of new Biological park at Chidiyatapu with 50% financial assistance from Central Zoo Authority.

Improvement and Renovation of Chatham Saw Mill Chatham :

Saw Mill was established in the year 1883. Most of its machinery has become obsolete due to wear and tear affecting production. During the year the order for procurement of circular and band saw sharpener is placed with DGS&D and expected to be installed in the end of the financial year. A new diesel engine is also procured to enhance the production of Betapur Saw Mill.

Protection of Forests and Coastal Eco-System :

The main emphasis envisaged in the scheme is to strengthen the protection network of the department. For this purpose additional infrastructure in the form of procurement of vehicles, speed boats etc. have been provided in the scheme.

Conservation of Mangroves :

Mangrove plays a vital role in conservation of coastal eco-system. It is also breeding ground for fishes. The scheme intends to protect and conserve mangrove eco-system, raising of nursery for mangrove seedlings and planting in mangrove-depleted areas.

Eco- Tourism:

Considering the vast tourism potential of these islands it is essential to utilize the available natural resources and develop them as potential source of tourist attraction. The scheme envisages to identity and develop nature's trail, organize nature camp and provide basic amenities to the tourists to appreciate the bounty of nature.