

## **Press Release**

### **Dr V. Irai Anbu, Chief Secretary inspects Forest Department works**

Dr V. Irai Anbu , the Chief Secretary to the Government of Tamil Nadu undertook a field inspection of various works being implemented by the Tamil Nadu Forest Department on Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> April. He was accompanied by the Additional Chief Secretary, Environment Climate Change and Forest Department Tmt. Supriya Sahu, Chief Wildlife Warden Thiru Srinivas Reddy, Chief Mission Director, Green Tamil Nadu Mission Thiru Deepak Srivastava, Director Advance Institute for Wildlife Thiru Udayan and the District Collector Chengalpattu Thiru Rahul Nath apart from other officers from the Department,

Dr Irai Anbu visited the Besant Nagar, Olive Ridley Turtle Hatchery setup by the Tamil Nadu Forest Department on the beach. He took a review of various initiatives being undertaken for collection of turtle eggs and release of hatchlings in the sea. He was informed that the Department has set up 34 turtle hatcheries across the coastal districts. A total of 2.17 Lakh eggs were collected and about 1.71 Lakh hatchlings were released. Rest was yet to hatch and were being cared for in various hatcheries. Chief Secretary interacted with anti-poaching watchers and appreciated their efforts for working in a dedicated fashion in saving turtles. He was happy to know that the Department had started the initiative of engaging students and local citizens in a big way towards Turtle conservation. In Chennai alone the Department had involved about 20,000 volunteers in this turtle season to generate awareness about conservation of turtles.

Dr Irai Anbu also inspected the Eco Park at the Pallikarani Marshland. He inspected the development works relating to creation of a green cover which includes plantation of about 5000 native trees. He enquired about the preparedness for the proposed Pallikarnai Wetlands Conservation Centre which has been recently announced by the Government. He was informed that the Department was in the process of preparing Integrated Management Plan for all 14 Ramsar sites in Tamil Nadu. He asked concerned officers to take immediate steps for removal of invasive species such as Eichhornia on priority basis to increase the water holding capacity of the wetland. He interacted with several visitors and took their feedback about the facilities provided at the Eco Park.

The Chief Secretary inspected construction works at the upcoming international hostel at the Advanced institute of wildlife Conservation (AIWC) at Vandalur which is being built to provide facilities for students and researchers who visit AIWC. He visited the newly launched State of the Art DNA sequencing lab, forensic lab, Animal Care lab and Morphometry lab. He was happy to note that the facilities had become operational providing best forensic facilities in the Government sector anywhere in India. Earlier the Department used to send animal samples to other states and

private labs but with these inhouse labs the Department has become self-reliant in advance forensic analysis.

A presentation was made to the Chief Secretary on the Green Tamil Nadu Mission including Mission targets, achievements, and the future roadmap. The TN Green Mission had achieved planting of about 2.8 Crore saplings in the state in the year 2022-23. The Department was gearing up to achieve the target of raising 7.5 Crore seedlings in 500 nurseries as per the mission target for the year 2023-24. The Mission had succeeded in bringing several partners together on the same platform including the Department of Rural Development and Agriculture in a big way. He was informed that the greening initiatives were being undertaken through District Forest Officers and District Collectors through District Green Committees. He later inspected a plantation site in Vandalur where 500 trees were planted.

Dr. Irai Anbu suggested to include land available in Sanatoriums, schools, colleges and Police Department for plantation under the Mission. He also suggested to involve local bodies like panchayats, municipalities, and corporations in the initiatives. It was suggested to document the flora and fauna as found in Sangam literature. The Chief Secretary emphasised the significance of involving people in the greening effort. He wanted the Mission to be more focussed on native species and to make it a people's project through extensive engagement of the local community and students.

The Chief Secretary visited the Night Safari project site in Vandalur and asked the concerned to speed up the work in a time bound manner. He also inspected the Rescue facility meant for the Rehabilitation of injured and other animals. He later inspected the Otteri lake located inside the Vandalur Zoo and reviewed the efforts of the Department to eco restore the lake at a cost of Rs 1.5 Crores under the Wetlands Mission.

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