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Abating coastal pollution for protecting environment in ecologically sensitive area of Astaranga, Puri district, Odisha

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Introduction

Pir Jahania, the famous shrine situated in the shore of Bay of Bengal and its scenic beach attract many tourists for their religious sentiment and as a beautiful picnic spot. The green cover of casuarinas, good mangrove vegetation and the mass nesting site of Olive ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) turtles are the specialty of this place. In spite of constant efforts by the forest department of Puri, continuous human interference deteriorates the environment with plastic pollution and other non-biodegradable materials like stray foam, thermocol, glass bottles turning the protection of the same as a major concern for the environmentalists. Puri Field Centre of ICAR-CMFRI along with forest department of Puri thus decided to make an awareness programme on plastic pollution in this tourist place.

Description of solid waste

Both biodegradable (Paper plates, leaf plates and Katori plant and leaf wastes) and non-biodegradable materials (Plastic and tin bottles, plastic packets, ghutaka cover, stray foam, thermocol plates, glass bottles) were handled.

Mode of collection/ transportation/ processing

Dr. Reeta Jayasankar, Scientist-in-charge Puri Field center along with the staffs visited Astaranga, Puri on 24/03/2017. A meeting was organized with the Chairman of Astaranga Block (Mr. Swadhin Kumar Nayak), range officer with his team from the forest department, deputy Sarpanch of Churiana Panchayat, Secretary of one NGO, Green Life Rural Association and the mullah of the Mosque Pir Jahania. There are more than 100 women belonging to different SHG. The group was joined by Mr. Toby Whitefield,

a French national associated with NGO group. Besides beach cleaning an awareness campaign was organized by forest department of Puri district, Odisha and the school children from Astaranga by making cycle rally for nearly 60 km from Astaranga to Arakuda of Puri district to send a message on green India and clean India to protect the ecologically sensitive areas from plastic pollution.

All the wastes (Paper plates, leaf plates and Katori plant and leaf wastes, Plastic and tin bottles, plastic packets, ghutaka cover, stray foam, thermocol plates, glass bottles etc.) dumped in the site were removed. Presently, regular cleaning is being done by the women SHG.

Impact

The main agenda of the meeting was to make the holy shrine free from plastics, Styrofoam products and polythene and declare the place for eco-tourism. Suggestions were made to a new entrepreneurship for the coastal women by making jute bags, paper plates, paper bags, supplying banana leaves, khali plate to the tourists during their picnic party. It was suggested to implement a check post before entering to this area. Awareness was created for the routine cleaning of the environment.

Adoption of this method by others

The already established method of making leaf plates and katori has been popularized as an entrepreneurship drive in the coastal area.

Children of the village schools were also sensitized to avoid the use of plastics. The Chairman Astaranga block has given whole hearted support to the people of Jahania to keep this destination as tourist hub for ecotourism. High decibel sound system is banned by the forest department to protect the turtle from noise pollution during nesting period.

Economic aspects

Astaranga Block is now taking care of the expenses for cleaning the area. Additionally, the Women SHG do this as a volunteer service to protect the environment. The programme suggested them to generate income generated from the same source, by following pay and use method for toilets, entry fee for the tourists etc.

Conclusion

Puri Field Centre of ICAR-CMFRI along with forest department of Puri made an awareness programme on the pollution in Pir Jahania, an ecotourism place in the shore of Bay of Bengal. Both biodegradable and non-biodegradable wastes dumped in the site were successfully removed. Presently, regular cleaning is assured by the women SHG of the location. Several suggestions were made to sustain the cleanliness of the premises to use this place as a picnic spot.