

Proceedings of Interactive Meeting between Department of Environment & Forests, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and IFGTB on Forestry Research and Extension

Participants:

The following officers of the Department of Environment and Forests, Andaman and Nicobar Islands participated in the meeting.

1. Shri. S.S. Choudhury, PCCF & Secretary (E&F)/ Secretary (S&T)
2. Shri. D.V. Negi, PCCF (WL) and CWLW
3. Dr. Alok Saxena, Addl. PCCF (P&D)
4. Shri. S.K. Bhandari, CCF (R&WP)
5. Shri S.C. Mukhopadhyay, GM, ANIFPDCL
6. Shri S. Senthilkumar, DCF(WL)/ Director (S&T)
7. Shri. Parimal Bose, DCF(S)
8. Shri. S.K.Das, DFO (E&P)
9. Shri. C.A. Rahman, Director, FTS
10. Shri. S.H.K. Murthi, ACF (GIS)
11. Shri P.K.Paul, ACF (Legal)
12. Shri. A.K. Paul, ACF

The following officials of IFGTB participated in the meeting:

1. Shri T.P.Raghunath, Group Coordinator (Research)
2. Shri. R.S.C. Jayaraj, Head, Forestry, Land Use and Climate Change division
3. Shri K. Ravichandran, Extension Officer
4. Dr. B. Nagarajan, Head, Plant Biotechnology Division
5. Dr. A. Karthikeyan, Scientist-C

Venue: Conference Hall, Van Sadan, Port Blair; Date: 31.05.2010

At the outset Shri T.P.Raghunath, Group Coordinator (Research), IFGTB, welcomed the officers of the Department of Environment and Forests, Andaman and Nicobar Islands for the interaction meeting on forestry research and extension. He stated that the Andaman and Nicobar Islands fall within the jurisdiction of the Institute for the purpose of forestry research, but owing to the remoteness of the islands not many projects have been initiated. He promised that in future the Institute shall pay greater attention to the needs of the department, in matters concerning forestry research. He informed that as the first step in the direction a Van Vigyan Kendra has been established and training programmes shall be organized through this Kendra to the forest executive staff. He also informed about the first training programme of the VVK from 1st to 5th June, 2010 planned at all the divisional headquarters of the department. The Kendra shall also bring out publications relevant to the islands. He thanked the department for the support given for the ongoing research projects of IFGTB in the Islands.

Shri. S.S. Choudhury, IFS, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Secretary (Environment and Forests) while delivering the inaugural address welcomed the officers and the scientists of IFGTB on behalf of the department. He said that though there is a research wing in the department, due to preoccupation with various routine activities the forest officers are not able to engage themselves in hard core research activities. He suggested that more

collaboration should be established between the department and the research institutions to improve the research capacity within the department. He desired that more research projects should be taken up by the Institute at the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Thereafter, Shri. R.S.C. Jayaraj, Silviculturist and Head of Forestry, Land Use and Climate Change division made a presentation highlighting the past and ongoing research activities of the institute, highlighting the past collaborative efforts with the department. He also discussed the research requirements of the islands drawing inputs from the Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Shekar Singh Commission Report, State of Environment- 2005 and the State Development Report, and what the institute can do for meeting those requirements in collaboration with the department.

Shri Parimal Bose, DCF (Silviculture) made a presentation on the issues requiring the attention of IFGTB. The major issues highlighted were the following:

1. The earthquake of December, 2004 had caused substantial changes in the geomorphology of the islands. The land has got uplifted in the north and submerged in the south. This tilting has resulted in upliftment of mangrove areas in North Andaman to the extent of about 2700 ha. IFGTB can help in the development of techniques for rehabilitation of the mangrove areas that have suffered due to upliftment of land.

2. As per the current working plans, the area under teak plantations have to be converted to natural forests. IFGTB may work out suitable techniques for conversion of teak plantations to natural forests.

3. He informed that 15% of the forest area which were earlier worked under Shelterwood system are now being worked under Selection system, and the interval between the successive workings has reduced from 75 years to 30 years. He suggested that IFGTB can take up a study on the impact of this operation on the forests and the soil.

4. He requested provenance delimitation for the species that are being extracted from the forests now, to understand the extent of genetic diversity in those species. Such a study in population genetics would help in conservation efforts as well as tree improvement.

5. He suggested development of nursery techniques for the species which are now being planted to bring back the worked forests to the original profile. Many of the species now being raised in the nursery are non-commercial species for which the department had not developed the nursery techniques. Now the seed handling techniques, seed storage methods and nursery practices have to be standardized for these species.

6. He informed that there is requirement of fodder in the villages and requested for identification of suitable tree fodder species from the forests of the Islands. He also informed that the need for poles and posts is increasing and requested identification of some fast growing species which can be planted in the vicinity of villages to meet the requirement of poles and posts.

7. He requested for a study to identify 5-10 medicinal plants which have commercial demand and which can be exported in raw, semi-processed or processed form from the islands, so that economic activities based on these plants can be thought of for the welfare of the local people.

8. He requested for research on biofuel species like Pongamia and Jatropha, and on the impact the plantation of these species may have on these islands.

9. He requested IFGTB to impart training on certification of timber, which is now being discussed worldwide.

10. He sought the assistance of IFGTB in the establishment of a tissue culture lab, soil testing lab and digitization of herbarium.

11. He suggested that Carbon balance sheet can be prepared for the Port Blair area to find out whether it is a carbon sink or source or is carbon neutral.

The presentation was followed by discussion among the participants. PCCF, Andaman & Nicobar Islands suggested that research on development of technique for rehabilitation of mangroves uplifted in North Andaman is very important. He said that nearly 2700 ha area is affected by this upliftment and research on rehabilitation of this land is an urgent necessity. Next to this he considered research on conversion of teak plantations into natural forests as important. He requested IFGTB to come out with research projects on these two areas immediately.

In the discussion that followed, Dr. B. Nagarajan highlighted the work he is doing on the species recovery programme related to *Bruguiera* spp. and its relevance for Andaman and Nicobar Islands. He explained in detail the role of pollinators in maintaining the health of the mangrove ecosystem, especially the bees, birds and butterflies.

During the discussion it was informed that *Jatropha* is an exotic to the islands and its cultivation may not be promoted. On the other hand, *Pongamia pinnata* is native to the islands and plantations of this species can be promoted for extraction of biofuel.

To a query by Dr. Alok Saxena on the methodology to be adopted for estimation of carbon sequestration potential of the forest ecosystems, it was replied that the available expertise with the department in the matter of remote sensing and GIS would be combined with intensive ground truthing to work out the biomass available in different pools of carbon, in various forest types. It was also informed that already IFGTB had estimated the soil organic carbon in different forest types of the islands as a part of the NATCOM project and has the capacity to undertake such studies.

PCCF, A&N Islands, in his capacity as the Secretary (Science and Technology) requested for studies on rehabilitation of granite quarries in and around Port Blair. He suggested that these sites can be inspected along with Director (Science and Technology) for formulation of projects.

Shri. K. Ravichandran, Extension Officer, proposed the formal vote of thanks.