



TAMIL NADU BIODIVERSITY BOARD

ISSUE 2 VOLUME 1

INCUMBENT UPDATE

Thiru. Debasis Jana IFS, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests assumed charges as the Secretary of TNBB on 18.08.2021 as a successor to Ms. Mita Banerjee IFS, APCCF.

TAKE A PEEK AT WHAT'S INSIDE:

- Open house meeting
- BMC training and field visits
- Access and Benefit Sharing
- Floral Diversity
- Traditional Knowledge

EDITORIAL

1. **Debasis Jana IFS**, APCCF & Secretary, TNBB
2. **Ajeeth A N**, NBA-UNDP BSIP Intern, TNBB

OPEN HOUSE MEETING



Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board (TNBB) is a statutory, autonomous & regulatory body of the Government of Tamil Nadu established to implement the mandates of Biological Diversity Act, 2002. The primary objectives of the act being Biodiversity Conservation and Natural Resource Management, the aspects of conservation and regulation are enacted in the State of Tamil Nadu by TNBB, with National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) being the top level authority in the implementation hierarchy. In order to go about with the accomplishment of mandates with the limited resources available, an open house meeting was held on 22.09.2021 at the Tamil Nadu Government Secretariat, Chennai to discuss about laying a roadmap towards Tamil Nadu's focus on Biodiversity Conservation for the upcoming future. The meeting was presided over by the Principal Secretary to Government, Environment, Climate Change and Forest Department. The context for the discussion was set by Thiru. Debasis Jana, IFS, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forest and Secretary, Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board wherein the current scenario of the Board and the proposed roadmap ahead was enumerated through a detailed presentation after which suggestions were put forward by officials represented by various line departments and stakeholder organizations/institutions.





The delegates who were present for the discussion were Dr. N. Krishnakumar, Retd IFS (Former PCCF & HoFF), Board Member, Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board, Dr. D. Narasiman, Board Member, Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board, Dr. V. Arivudai Nambai, Independent Expert on Biodiversity, Member, ABS Expert Committee, Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board, Dr. M.U. Sharief, Scientist - E & Head, Southern Regional Centre, Botanical Survey of India, Thiru.Samuel Inbaraj, Director, State Institute of Rural Development, Dr. R. Venkitesan ,

Scientist-E, Southern Regional Centre, Zoological Survey of India, Dr. P. Sudhakar, G. Viswanathan, Joint Secretary to Government, Environment, Climate Change and Forests Department, Director of CPR Environmental Education Centre, R. Ravichandran, Deputy Director, Fisheries and Fisherman Welfare Department, Tmt. K.S. Sivagami, Under Secretary to Government, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, J. Mohan, Assistant Director, Agriculture Department, M. Krishna Devi, Agricultural Officer, Agriculture Department, Dr. M. Krishnaveni, Technical Consultant, State Medicinal Plant Board, Tmt. R. Sarasavani, Joint Chief Environmental Engineer, Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board, Dr. N. Parasuraman, M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, Dr. G.N. Hariharan, M S Swaminathan Research Foundation and Dr. C. Manjula, Consultant, Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board. Pratim Roy, Founder Director, Keystone Foundation, Kotagiri and Dr. Jayashree Vencatesan, Care Earth Trust, Chennai joined the discussion through online platform. The key suggestions put forward were to increase the visibility of the Board and its activities through increased awareness and publicity, involvement of student community and youth in biodiversity conservation activities, training and capacity building to various stakeholders in cyclic manner, institutional strengthening of Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs), rope in more companies under the bracket of ABS etc. From the suggestions obtained, a 35 imperative action points were listed down to be pursued by the Board so as to accomplish them by March 2022.



BMC TRAINING & FIELD VISITS

Prabakaran M - Program coordinator - TNBB
Ajeeth A N - NBA-UNDP BSIP Intern - TNBB

Biodiversity Management Committees (BMC) are the grassroot level institutions in the implementation hierarchy. They are established at every local body, both rural and urban. Tamil Nadu has 13607 BMCs constituted till date at various levels with the major chunk being Village Panchayat Level BMCs accounting to 12524. These BMCs are currently at an infancy stage requiring technical and financial handholding for them to function in a self-sustaining manner. For this purpose, 90 Block Level Panchayat BMCs have been selected to be made as Model BMCs. TNBB is in the process of training these 90 Block level BMCs and also the Village Panchayat BMCs in these Blocks.





During the month of July, TNBB in co-ordination with the local Forest Department and Rural Development & Panchayati Raj Department, conducted a training and capacity building program in the Alathur Block BMC including 13 Village Panchayat BMCs under the Block of Prambalur District. In a similar fashion, a team from TNBB conducted BMC training programs in Vadipatti Block in Madurai District covering 22 Village Panchayat BMCs and Narikudi Block in Virudhunagar District covering 14 Village Panchayats BMCs. The interactive sessions with the participants made them open up regarding the available resources, collection of bio-resources, scope for conservation and other activities etc. The participants also actively raised several doubts regarding the various roles, responsibilities, powers and scope pertaining to Biodiversity Management Committee.

The target audience for whom the training is proposed are primarily BMC stakeholders consisting of Block Development Officers who are the Block Level BMC Secretaries, BMC members, Village Panchayat Presidents and Village Panchayat Secretaries who are the Village Panchayat BMC Secretaries. The topics focused in the training program are Introduction to Biodiversity Concepts, Overview about Laws and Legislations pertinent to Biodiversity i.e., Biological Diversity Act, 2002, Biological Diversity Rules and Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Rules, 2017, Brief on the Roles and Responsibilities of BMC, Overview about Peoples Biodiversity Register (PBR) and Summary of Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) Mechanism.



Based on the inputs given and interest shown by the villagers, some of the villages were chosen for further field visit. In co-ordination with Village Panchayat Presidents, the villages of Katchaikatty, Kutladampatti, Viralipatti, Mullipallam, Kadupatti, Mannadimangalam and Thiruvudagam of Vadipatti Block in Madurai District were visited. Most of the above villages were rich in biodiversity, especially medicinal plants which were collected and traded. Some people were practicing sustainable harvesting while some had least regard to it. But there could be seen wide spread medicinal plant trade in the areas visited.

The village people where visits were undertaken, after knowing about the provisions of ABS and charging levy fee for utilization of resources, showed great interest in activating the BMC and taking further actions. The availability of huge amount of resources (already being collected) throughout the year gives huge scope for ABS and charging levy fees which can help in improving livelihood of the villagers especially those involved in collection. There is also scope for creation of localized value addition centre and cultivation of traded species that are in high demand.



In the Katchaikatti village of Vadipatti Block, there lies a special breed of sheep known as the Katchaikatti Black Sheep, which is unique to this particular village and known for its fighting qualities that is used for ram fighting. The Sheep dung acts as a rich organic manure to enhance the fertility of agricultural fields. Hence it is used for penning. Penning is a practice wherein a flock of sheep is enclosed in an agricultural field for a certain period and the excreta acts as manure. This practice is another income generator for the sheep growers.



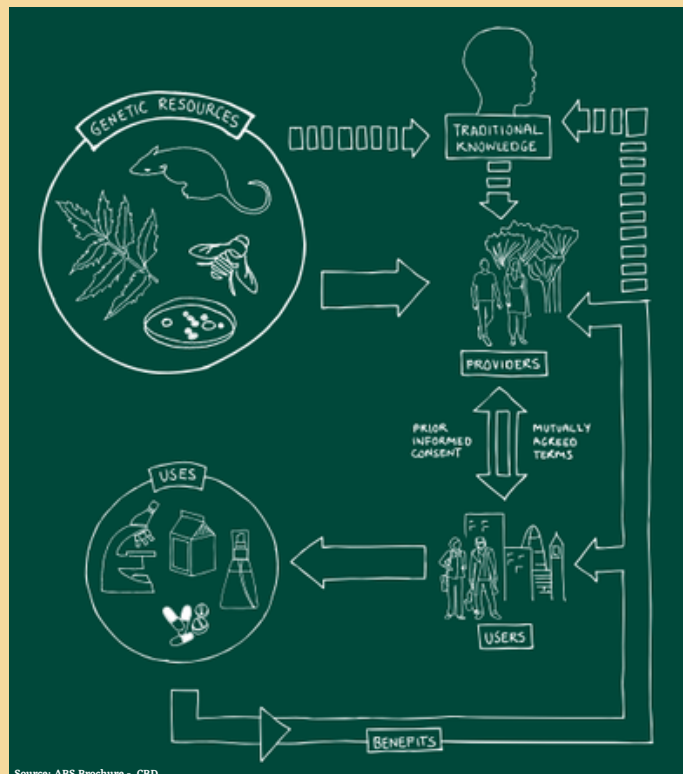
In Virudhunagar District, which acts one of the hubs for Medicinal Plant Trade, the team visited a godown that was acting as a processing facility in the region. Also, the team interacted with few of the traders in the District to obtain information on the trade routes and end user details. The information gathered have been documented for facilitating ABS mechanism. Furthermore, the participants of the training program requested for frequent programs to be conducted. They also requested to provide necessary technical and financial support to carry out various activities pertinent to Biodiversity Conservation and Natural Resource Management.





ACCESS AND BENEFIT SHARING (ABS)

In accordance to the Nagoya Protocol, benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources as well as subsequent applications and commercialization shall be shared in a fair and equitable way with the Party providing such resources that is the country of origin of such resources or a Party that has acquired the genetic resources in accordance with the Convention. Such sharing shall be upon mutually agreed terms. India ratified this International Agreement by notifying its domestic legislation in this regard, 'Guidelines on Access to Biological Resources and Associated Knowledge and Benefits Sharing Regulations, 2014' and the same being implemented through a three tier mechanism involving National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), State Biodiversity Board (SBB) and Biodiversity Management Committee (BMC). Regulation of biological resources is one of the primary mandates in preventing over-exploitation and ensuring sustainability apart from the aspect of benefit sharing and as a means of regulating access and use of biological resources, individuals / entities who are to access



Source: ABS Brochure - CBD

biological resources are required to get necessary permission from Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board (TNBB) when the access is bound to take place in Tamil Nadu region. For this purpose TNBB receives applications under two sections of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002-Section 3 and Section 7. Users who are non-Indians or organizations with non-Indian participation submit their requests for access to bio resources to the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) under Section 3, whereas users or user organizations registered in India apply directly to the respective State Biodiversity Board under Section 7. NBA forwards applications under Section 3 to TNBB for their recommendations. NBA also forwards applications under Section 6 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 dealing with intellectual property rights to TNBB when necessary. The Board after due appraisal of the application and after consultation with the Biodiversity management Committees concerned and, after collecting such additional information, as it may deem fit and if necessary, after consulting an expert committee constituted for this purpose, shall pass orders on the application, as far as possible within a period of three months of receipt of the same. In this regard the ABS expert committee of TNBB met on Aug 22nd, 2021 during which 5 applications received through NBA and 5 applications received by TNBB were processed.

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Article by: Ajeeth A N & Varsha S

Traditional Knowledge (TK) can be described as the wisdom held by local or indigenous communities that has been established as a result of observation and understanding of the surrounding environment for several generations. A majority of traditional knowledge has been passed on from one generation to another predominantly through oral means and lacking any physical documentation.. India has both recorded traditional knowledge such as the texts of ancient medicinal practices of Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani, and oral knowledge such as those held by indigenous and tribal communities. Traditional knowledge can also be understood as an embodiment of the rich cultural heritage of our country that plays a vital role in catering to the livelihood of people as well as facilitating the conservation of natural resources.





However, lately, traditional knowledge and their associated practices are dwindling due to rapid urbanization and migration which is hindering the devolution of knowledge to successive generations. Traditional knowledge has also largely remained informal without adequate protection in the typical systems. Moreover, in recent years, TK is increasingly being exploited for commercial benefits. There are a number of situations where knowledge holders are deprived of their share of the benefits arising out of commercial utilization of traditional knowledge. Most well-known cases in this regard are the neem and turmeric cases where foreign companies obtained patents after studies proved the antifungal property of neem and wound healing property of turmeric. The patents were later revoked after India intervened and objected to them stating that the medicinal properties of neem and turmeric were common knowledge among Indian households and have been used since generations.

The Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) was established by the Government of India at the backdrop of the patent cases of neem and turmeric. Moreover, in order to avoid the exploitation of natural resources and their associated traditional knowledge, the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 mandates the users of associated TK pertinent to biological resources to share a percentage of the benefits acquired out of its utilization with the knowledge holders. Also, to prevent bio-piracy and misappropriation of TK at the International Patent Offices, the various TK documented so far have been made available in 5 languages, i.e., English, German, French, Spanish and Japanese so as to enable reduce barriers to the access of documented TK while examining patents. In conclusion, it can be said that the wealth of knowledge and practices held by communities since generations have provided them livelihood and contributed to the conservation of the environment, and hence, they are to be inevitably protected from being exploited by private monopoly

PUBLICATION ON THE STATES FLORAL DIVERSITY

Board member Dr. D. Narasimhan , Professor (Retd) , Madras Christian College along with his Doctoral pupil Dr. Sheeba J.Irwin brought out a database on the floral diversity of the state, titled 'Flowering Plants of Tamil Nadu : A Compendium' which encompasses a whopping 6723 taxa consisting of comprehensive information including species distribution, threat status, endemism and its economic use. The compendium in its own will act as a kind of atlas for species identification especially in the PBR validation and updation process. The book shall also be of immense use to botanists, taxonomists, foresters, wildlife ecologists and other stakeholders to comprehend the diversity and distribution of flowering plants in the state. The documented book has thus proven the species richness of the state in terms of floral diversity which stands number one in the country despite having a mere 4% geographical area with several species being endemic to the state. The book was made possible with the support and aid of National Biodiversity Authority, Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board and Care Earth Trust – a Chennai based biodiversity research organisation.

