

**Draft minutes of the first meeting of the Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board held at Chennai on 14-10-2008.**

**Agenda item 1: Granting leave of absence to members who could not attend the meeting.**

Leave of absence was granted to Principal Secretary to Government, Department of Agriculture, Chennai - 9.

**Agenda item 2: Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board - Details and action taken for information of the members.**

**(a) Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board office:**

The Principal Secretary to Government, Environment and Forests Department informed that orders have been issued fixing the head quarters of the Board at Chennai. The Chairman informed that Trichy is the geographic centre for the state and suggesting the head quarters of the Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board at Trichy may be considered.

**(b) Staff for the Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board:**

It was resolved to constitute a sub committee of the board consisting of the following members to examine the staffing pattern and suggest a structure.

- (a) Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden - Convenor.
- (b) Prof. S. Natarajan - Member
- (c) Dr. A. Manickam - Member
- (d) Mr. S. Subramanian - Member

The nominees of the Principal Secretary to Government, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries Department and the Vice-Chancellor of TANUVAS will also be invited in the sub committee. The sub committee was requested to give its report in one month time for further action.

**(c) Creation of State Biodiversity fund:**

The Board has resolved to request the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden to work out the cost details required for functioning of

the Board, taking into account the staff pattern, fund flow from National Biodiversity Authority and other sources.

(ii) Local Biodiversity fund

Resolved to note the present stage

Agenda item No.3:- Constitution of the Biodiversity Management Committees.

It was resolved to constitute Biodiversity Management Committees in each district under the Chairmanship of the District Collector, initially. After building up awareness about the functioning of this committee under the provisions of the Act and after stabilization, the Biodiversity Management Committees may be constituted at the Panchayat Union level.

Agenda item No.4:- Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Heritage sites.

The sub committee constituted vide item 2(ii) can also work out the criteria for identifying the Biodiversity heritage sites within a period of 2 months. Mr.S. Kondas, Member has given a note on 'constituting Agathiarmalai as a world heritage site', which can also be examined by the sub-committee and a follow up action can be suggested.

Agenda item No.5:- Establishment of people's Biodiversity Registers.

The sub committee constituted vide item 2(ii) can look into this issue also, and give its suggestions on adopting the format suggested by National Biodiversity Authority (or) recommending modifications as per situation pertaining to Tamil Nadu within 2 months time.

Agenda item No.6:- Framing of Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Rules:-

The sub committee constituted vide agenda item 2(ii) can look into this issue also and give a draft Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Rules for discussion within 1 month time.

The meeting came to an end with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

*[Signature]*  
29/10/08/2

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*[Signature]*  
31.10.08  
Principal Secretary.

Suggestion for constituting Agathiarmalai a World Heritage Site (Natural Site)

As on 2008, the number of World Heritage Sites is 878 - cultural 679, natural 174 and mixed 25. Japan has with 41 closely followed by Spain with 39, China 37, Germany 30 and India 27 in the world level. In India Cultural Heritage Sites number 22 and Natural Heritage Sites five. The latest in the list is the Red Fort complex which was inscribed on June 2007. The recent additions are for Majuli Island of 422 km<sup>2</sup> in Brahmaputra Valley of Assam under Cultural Heritage Category, and the Kalka-Simla Railway.

Tamil Nadu has three World Heritage Sites and all of them are cultural. They are Great Living Chola Temples, Group of Monuments at Mahalipuram and the Nilgiri Mountain Railway. Tamil Nadu has no natural site. Of the natural sites, Assam has two (Kaziranga National Park, Nanda Devi Wildlife Sanctuary), Rajasthan one (Keolodev National Park), Uttaranchal one (Nanda Devi valley of Flowers) and West Bengal one (Sundarbans National Park).

Therefore I am placing my suggestion before the Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board for constituting Agathiarmalai in Tirunelvely district a, World Heritage Site (natural site).

Assuming the Board's approval of my suggestion for constituting Agathiarmalai a World Heritage Site (natural Site), the first step is to get it included in the prescribed Nomination file. The World Heritage Centre offers advice and help in preparing this file. The International Council on Monuments and Sites and the World Conservation Union after evaluation and selection, make recommendations to the World Heritage Committee which meets once a year and examines if it qualifies for the status of World Heritage Site.

There are ten selection criteria, six for cultural heritage site and four for **natural site**. I am reproducing the criteria for natural site verbatim. The criteria are:

1001. "to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance";

1002. "to be outstanding examples representing major stages of Earth's History, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features";

1003. "to be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals";

to contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-site conservation of biodiversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation."

A new concept biological Diversity Hotspot was coined recently to conserve biodiversity globally. The definition is "The criteria for declaring an area a hotspot are that it contains at least 1,500 endemic plant species out of the world's total of 300,000 (at least 0.5 per cent of the world's endemic vascular plants) and secondly it has to have lost at least 70% of the original habitat." Norman Myers (1988).

On a global basis there are 34 hotspots, two of them are in India ( the Indo-Burma and the Western Ghats) The Western Ghats biodiversity hotspot falls in Kerala (10 Protected Areas of 1070 km<sup>2</sup>) and Tamil Nadu (four Protected Areas of 1070 km<sup>2</sup>). They are Anamalai-Kalakad-Mundanthurai - 290 km<sup>2</sup>, Megamalai - 120 km<sup>2</sup> and Mukuruthi National Park - 660 km<sup>2</sup>.

The Protected Areas mentioned above represent the Western Ghats and contain most of the plant kingdom including 1,500 endemics (38 per cent). The gymnosperm flora is represented by *Cycas circinalis* (Cycadales), *Decussocarpus wallichianus* (Coniferales), *Cnetum* and *Gnetum* (Gnetales). There are 320 species of pteridophytes, 200 species of bryophytes, 300 species of algae, 600 species of fungi and 800 species of lichens

There is great diversity in birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fishes and butterflies. Most of the data come from the studies confined to Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reseve (KMTR) in the Western Ghats.

Through out Western Ghats, four Protected Areas of 1070 km<sup>2</sup> were areas of plant taxonomic research on birds, reptiles, amphibians, insects etc. since the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by foresters, botanists, wildlife specialists, bird watchers, herpetologists, entomologists etc. The wealth of taxonomic fund of knowledge left by them is great. However, there is very little information about on ecology, biology, behavioural study, geology, tribal culture, sociology etc. The present state of knowledge will not pass muster the demands of the Protected Areas mentioned above. So the immediate step is to place in position a team of experts necessary to do the important spade work of meeting the requirements of criteria for a Hotspot.

This subject falls under Agenda Item No. 4



Secretary, Retired Principal Chief Conservator of Forests.  
Member, Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board