



WWF for a living planet

September - October 2009

Mruthika

Newsletter of WWF - India, Kerala State Office, Thiruvananthapuram 695 035

FROM THE STATE DIRECTOR'S DESK

The last two months witnessed two major national events organised by WWF-India. Both the events were organised on priority environmental issues. Prithvi Ratna National Essay Writing Competition was announced on the theme of Climate Change especially in the background of the Copenhagen Summit. The initiative was a joint venture launched by WWF-India and Union Ministry of Environment and Forests targeted at sensitizing young minds to the issue of climate change. The students were asked to write essay on 'You are India's future generation - How can you lead / influence the climate change challenge to ensure a sustainable future for the country and the planet?' There was overwhelming response from all parts of the country with students from schools and colleges sending in their entries in English or Hindi. The essays were evaluated at the state level and the winning entries were sent for the national-level selection round. The top winners of the competition get to be a part of the Prime Ministerial delegation to Copenhagen. The programme was a grand success in achieving its target of sensitizing the student's community to the issue of climate change. Every year, National Wildlife Week is celebrated in India in the first week of October. Unlike organizing

awareness programmes as part of the week, this year WWF-India launched the national quiz competition for school children titled 'Wild Wisdom Quiz 2009'. The competitions were held at regional, state and national levels. This competition also evoked immense response. The State-level Winners from Kerala bagged the Second Position in the national-level round. In September, we could also organize the Coastal Cleanup Day (ICCD) and the Ozone Day. ICCD had many new and young volunteers coming forward for the event. Ozone day was organised this year in Kochi and evoked huge response with about more than 150 participants being tightly packed into a 100 seat venue. The very positive and dynamic responses, especially from the younger generation, for all such programmes give us much optimism. Even though we do not see any such proactive approach among today's administrators and decision makers with regard to environmental issues, what we foresee is that the change that we bring in the hearts and minds of the children today, will evoke positive responses as they become responsible citizens of tomorrow.

Renjan Mathew Varghese, *State Director*

IMPORTANT NEWS ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE

GLOBAL

Maldives Cabinet meets under water to seek action on climate change

Maldives, facing a grave threat of being swamped by the rising sea levels, appealed for concerted action on climate change when it's Cabinet held the world's first underwater meeting to highlight the danger posed to low-lying nations by global warming. The Maldivian Cabinet met at the bottom of the sea to frame an SOS to global leaders to save their atoll nation from being submerged by the rising seas. A declaration approved at the end of a 25-minute meeting, presided by President Mohammad Nasheed, called for global action to combat climate change. It will be presented at the Copenhagen Climate Summit in December. "We

should come out of Copenhagen with a deal that will ensure that everyone will survive," said Mr. Nasheed. "Maldives is a frontline state and what happens to us today will happen to others tomorrow." The declaration said global warming was sending the ice caps crashing into the sea, leading to sharp rise in water levels. Mr. Nasheed and his colleagues used white boards and hand signals to communicate their decisions. The Maldivian Ministers went to these extraordinary lengths as a United Nations panel on climate change had warned that even a rise in sea levels between 18 and 60 cm would submerge the islands by 2100. Maldives comprises more than 100 islands scattered over 800 km across the equator, and 90 per cent of them are just a metre above sea level (*The Hindu*, 19.10.09)

Thirty-two new planets discovered

European astronomers have found 32 new planets outside the solar system, adding evidence to the theory

that the universe has many places where life could develop. Scientists using the European Southern Observatory telescope did not find any planets quite the size of Earth or any that seemed habitable or even unusual. But their announcement increased the number of planets discovered outside the solar system to more than 400. Six of the newly found planets are several times bigger than Earth, increasing the population of so-called Super-Earths by more than 30 percent. Most planets discovered so far are far bigger, Jupiter-sized or even larger. Two of the newly discovered planets were as small as five times the size of Earth and one was up to five times larger than Jupiter (*The Hindu*, 22.10.09).

NATIONAL

Now, 'wood-plastic' hybrid to reduce carbon footprint

Scientists in Bangalore City have got the go-ahead to develop a new class of material, an unlikely hybrid of the organic and synthetic, that could change forever the way we see furniture, packaging, automobile interiors and even aircraft. The Institute of Wood Science and Technology (IWST) has been granted Rs. 20 lakh by the Union Ministry of Science and Technology to develop a hybrid that combines the durability of plastic and versatility of wood – in a composite of wood fibre, plastic and nanoclay (used generally as reinforcement of plastic). The unique wood-polymer composite, lighter and stronger than wood and partly biodegradable unlike plastic is most importantly cost effective. The “hybrid polypropylene - montmorillonite wood”, moreover, is fairly heat and fire resistant and can be fashioned into automobile interiors, furniture, aircraft parts and building interiors, according to S.C. Joshi, Director of the Institute of Wood Science and Technology. But creating this product meant overcoming one major challenge: how do you fuse two materials that are antithetical to each other in their properties? While natural wood is hydrophilic (with an affinity to water) plastic is hydrophobic (repels water), and therefore, cannot form a composite. Scientists achieved this by using a novel coupling agent, “compatibilizer”. At a time when environmental legislation and growing consumer awareness are putting pressure on manufacturers to go green and reduce environmental impacts of their products from cradle to grave, the inclusion of biodegradable wood fibre makes sense. Also, the use of recycled wood fibre extracted from newsprint and sawdust will make the product cheaper. This sturdy hybrid could replace energy-intensive material such as aluminium and glass fibre, and therefore lower greenhouse gas emissions (*The Hindu*, 14.09.09).

Hogs to be reintroduced in forest

West Bengal's Forest Department has decided to reintroduce the critically endangered pygmy hog in north Bengal's Gorumara forest. The department has sought a feasibility report for the project from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI). After the successful release of the hunched, barely two-foot long, furry hogs into the wild at the Sonai Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary and Nameri National Park in Assam in 2008, the Forest Department wants to replicate the experiment in the forests of north Bengal, since it falls in the region that is the original home of the wild suids (pigs), said A.K. Sanyal, Additional Director of ZSI. “The pygmy hogs were seen at the Gorumara forest till a few years back, which is why it was decided to reintroduce them there as a measure to restore the biodiversity of the area,” said P.K. Ray, the State's Additional PCCF (Wildlife). “Earlier, they were easily located in Nepal, Bhutan and India, but they are not found anywhere other than Assam today — a situation that must be changed,” said Dr. Sanyal (*The Hindu*, 19.09. 09).

STATE

Tiger Conservation Foundation soon

A Tiger Conservation Foundation will be formed for the Periyar Tiger Reserve by dissolving the Periyar Foundation. The new foundation will be named Tiger Conservation Foundation, Periyar Tiger Reserve, Kerala. The foundation is being formed as per the guidelines of the National Tiger Conservation Authority. The Periyar Foundation was formed in 2004 for supporting tiger conservation and allied activities of the reserve. The new foundation will focus on mobilising financial resources to foster stakeholder development and eco-tourism, the draft regulation says. The governing body of the foundation will be headed by the Kerala Forests Minister. The Principal Forest Secretary will be its Vice-Chairperson and the Chief Wildlife Warden its Member Secretary. Senior forest officials, including the PCCF, CCF (Wildlife), and the CCF (Eco-development and Tribal Welfare) will be its members and the Field Director of the reserve its Executive Director. The draft has suggested including the Idukki MP as a member. The Divisional Forest Officers of Ranni, Konni, Achencoil, Thenmala, Punalur, and Kottayam divisions and the Gavi Divisional Manager of the Kerala Forest Development Corporation will be its executive committee members. They are included for the successful implementation of buffer zone activities and activities related to corridor management. The foundation will own all the assets of the Periyar Foundation. These will be transferred to it by the State Government. It will have its headquarters at Thekkady and the area of operation will be Periyar Tiger Reserve and its adjoining

landscape forming the impact zone with possible corridor value for dispersal of wild animals from the tiger reserve (*The Hindu*, 21.10.09)

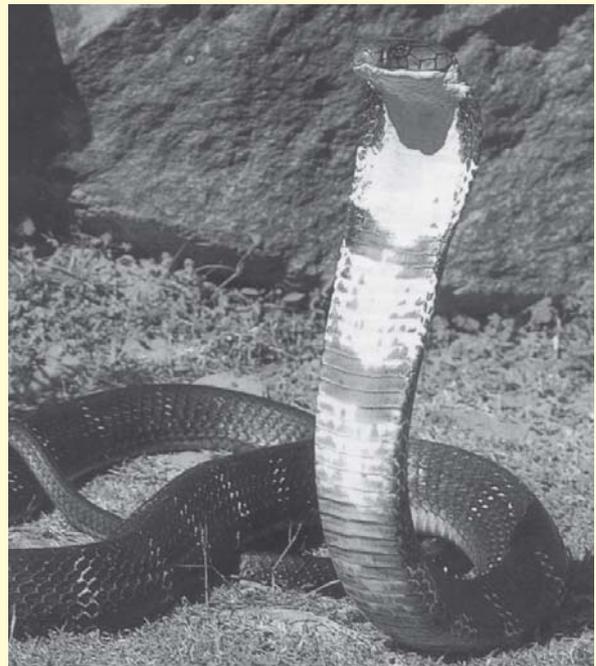
Clean-up drive gives grimy facts

The cleaning drive organised on the Shanghumughom beach here, in connection with International Coastal Cleanup Day, revealed the dire need of adequate litter bins on the premises. Volunteers of the World Wide Fund for Nature- India (WWF-India), Kerala unit along with TIDY CITY and Nature Club members collected three bags of litter from a section of the beach. The waste collected was segregated after the two hour drive that started at 7 a.m. Major contributors (50 per cent) were wooden ice-cream sticks, followed by plastic wastes including spoons, ice-cream cups, bottles, food wrappers and disposable plastic cups. They were given a good fight by cigarette butts and burnt match sticks (25 per cent). Though the number of liquor bottles (4) was less in number, it indicated the callous attitude towards disposal of such 'injurious waste,' according to WWF-India State unit. Newspaper bits and abandoned toys constituted the rest of the garbage. The volunteers also came across remnants of a Ganesha idol made of Plaster of Paris weighing 5 kg on the beach. Shanghumughom was the venue for the immersion of the recent Ganesha festival held in the district. Surprisingly, just two mineral water bottles were found. According to the WWF unit, a disturbing recovery was that of two diapers. Usually diapers are used for infants by well-to-do families. The presence of diapers on the beach pointed to a careless attitude towards environmental protection, it said. The data collected is entered into a standard datasheet which will be shared with an international agency who, with its global partners, will compile the data. The agency will come out with the final report on the trends in coastal and marine pollution at a global scale (*The Hindu*, 20.09. 09).

SPECIES OF THIS ISSUE

King Cobra (*Ophiophagus hannah*)

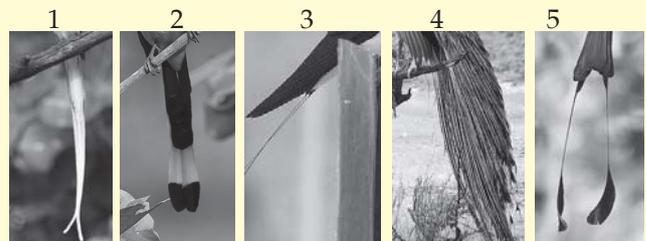
The King Cobra is the world's longest venomous snake, with a length up to 5.6 m (18.5 ft). This species is widespread throughout Southeast Asia and parts of India, and is found mostly in forested areas. The King Cobra is not a kind of cobra at all; it belongs to its own genus. It can be identified from other cobras by its size and the pattern on its neck. King Cobras are larger than other cobras, and the stripe on its neck is like the symbol "^^" instead of a double or single eye shape that may be seen in other cobras. King Cobra's genus name, *Ophiophagus*, literally means "snake-eater", and its diet consists primarily of other snakes,



including rat snakes, sizeable pythons and even other venomous snakes (including kraits, cobras and smaller members of its own species). The venom of the King Cobra is primarily neurotoxic, and the snake is fully capable of killing a human with a single bite. The mortality rate from a bite can be as high as 75%.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

Have you ever experienced the fun of bird watching? Try to identify the birds from the photos of their tail and collect their characterizations.



ACTIVITIES OF WWF-INDIA KERALA STATE OFFICE

SEPTEMBER 2009

Nature Orientation Camp in Nilgiris

A four day camp was conducted covering various places in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve with fourteen participations, mainly family members of supporters

and well wishers of the organization from 10th to 14th September. The camp started at Nilambur where Kerala shares its boarder with Karnataka and Tamilnadu. The team visited the Kanoly's plot, the ever first teak plantation of Kerala, teak museum of



KFRI and Nedumkayam forests. On the second day the team got a chance to have a van ride through the forests of Muthumala WLS which offered good wildlife sightings.

At Masinagudy the team visited the farm lands, tribal huts and nearby forests. In the evening they visited Bandhipur NP and were treated to excellent sightings. A herd of nearly 300 spotted deers were there in the vicinity of the forest office by late evening. The trip was highly interesting with sighting all these animals.

The third day's trip was to Ooty, where the campers enjoyed the serene beauty of the place as well as understand the negative impact of tourism on the area. They got a chance to interact with the farmers of the place harvesting carrot and understood the issues associated with agriculture. The camp ended with the travel back to Thiruvananthapuram.

Ozone Day 2009

International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer 2009 was commemorated on 16th and 17th of September 2009 at Ernakulam. On 16th, painting and mini drama/ skit competitions was organized at



Rotary Auditorium, Panampilly Nagar, Kochi. About 50 students from 8 different educational institutions participated. Master Akash K. of Cochin Refineries School, Ambalamukal, Kum. Stephy Caroline Stanley of SBOA Public (Sr. Sec) School, Chittoor and Master. Basil Baby Alex of Cochin Refineries School,



Ambalamukal bagged 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes. Kum.Rachana Ramesh and Master. Dawn Abraham of Cochin Refineries School, Ambalamukal were awarded with the consolation prizes.

On 17th, for the awareness programme, Mr. Renjan Mathew Varghese, State Director, introducing the workshop, explained the history of Ozone Day celebrations and about the various programmes held at the global and local level to educate and generate awareness among the different sections of the society. Dr. V. Madhu, Lecturer, Department of Atmospheric Sciences, Cochin University of Science and Technology was the Chief Guest and he inaugurated the awareness programme. With his vast experience in extensive global and local data collection on ozone layer and its various related parameters and his research expertise, the participants really had a great opportunity to hear and learn about the various aspects of the ozone layer. Mr. K.S. Vijayakumar, Chief Environmental Scientist from the Central Laboratory in Cochin under the State Pollution Control Board delivered the special address on the occasion. Mr. Harinath V. from JCI Cochin delivered the vote of thanks concluding the inaugural programme.

After tea break, the documentary brought out by United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) –

'Ozzy Ozone' was screened for the benefit of the participants. Mr. Ramachandran, retired scientist from ISRO and an active member of Kerala Sastra Sahithya Parishad (KSSP) led the technical session titled 'Ozone layer – its facts and issues'. He had very good interaction with the students. Mr. A.K. Sivakumar, Education Officer of WWF-India led a quiz programme on the theme. More than a competition, it was an awareness generation activity. The students thoroughly enjoyed the session. It was more of an interactive learning process. In the valedictory function, the winners of the competitions were announced and awards and certificates distributed.

In addition to this programme, A.K. Sivakumar, Education Officer took awareness classes on Ozone depletion and its impacts on 19th and 23rd at Govt. HSS, Kezharoor and Govt. HSS, Venjaramoodu, Thiruvananthapuram. The sessions helped in sensitizing the student community on ozone depletion and related topics.

Coastal Cleanup Day 2009

WWF-India, Kerala State Office with volunteers from TIDY CITY and Nature Club members observed International Coastal Cleanup Day 2009 with the beach-cleaning programme from 7am to 9.00 am at Shanghumughom Beach on Saturday, September 19th. This is the fourth time the event is being observed locally under the initiative of WWF – India. This is the largest and most successful volunteer event of its kind



globally and in Thiruvananthapuram about 15 volunteers participated in the clean-up drive. More than a cleanup drive, the significance of the event is with regard to the collection of the litter from a unit stretch of the beach and its segregation and further quantification. The data collected is input into a standard datasheet which will then be shared with an international agency who with its global partners compile the data and come out with the final report on the trends in our coastal and marine pollution at the global scale.

OCTOBER 2009

Wild Wisdom Quiz Competition

The Wild Wisdom Quiz 2009 got off to a vibrant start with the first regional round being conducted in

St. Mary's HSS, Pattom, Thiruvananthapuram. Nineteen teams of two students each from the schools of southern region of Kerala including Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam and Alappuzha districts participated in the competition. The quiz was mastered by Mr. A.K. Sivakumar and assisted by Ms. Shalini and Mr. Hari. The quiz questions were very comprehensive being categorised into eight subsections covering forests, wildlife, protected areas, flora, fauna, personalities, institutions, laws and legislations etc. The quiz was more Kerala centric but had few questions on national and international issues on wildlife conservation also. The teams from Chinmaya Vidyalaya (Vazhuthacaud), Sree Narayana Guru Central School (Ezhukone, Kollam) and Cherupushpa Bethany School (Alappuzha) bagged the first, second and third prizes respectively.



The regional round conducted at Kozhikode on 7th October was held at Prestige Public School, Mankavu. Eighteen teams of two students each from the schools of northern region of Kerala including Kozhikode, Malappuram and Kasargod districts participated in the competition. The quiz was mastered by Mr. A.K. Sivakumar and assisted by Ms. Seema and other faculties of the school. The teams from Al-Haramine English School, Puthiyangadi, Devagiri CMI Public School and Veda Vyasa Vidyalayam, Kozhikode bagged the first, second and third prizes respectively.

In the regional round conducted for Central Kerala at Thrissur on 7th October at Govt. Model Boys School, the quiz was mastered by Mr. Jain. J Therattil, District Co-ordinator of WWF-NCI. Sacred Heart English Medium Senior Sec. School, Malappuram and Rajagiri HSS, Ernakulam bagged the first and second prizes.



Semi final of the Wild Wisdom Quiz 2009 was held on 10th October at the Radio Kiosk of Museum Garden at Thiruvananthapuram. The first and second winners from the northern, central and southern regions participated in the semifinal. The eight round quiz was mastered by Mr. Renjan Mathew Varghese, State Director and Mr. A.K. Sivakumar, Education Officer

of WWF-India and assisted by Ms. Shalini, Ms. Aswathy and Mr. Hari.

The teams from Rajagiri HSS, Kalamassery (Ernakulam), Sree Narayana Guru Central School, Ezhukone (Kollam) and Chinmaya Vidyalaya, Vazhuthacaud (Thiruvananthapuram) bagged the first, second and third prizes respectively. The winning team from the State competed with 13 teams from the other states at the grand finale on 14th November, 2009 at New Delhi and they won the second prize.

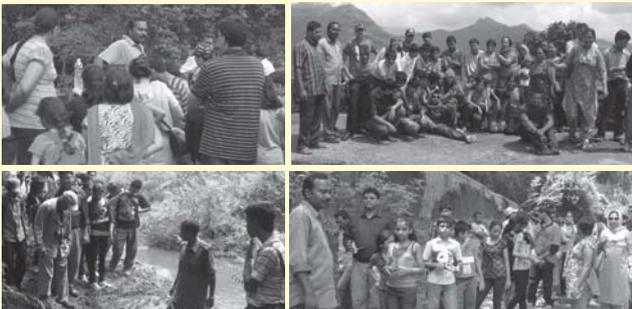
Friday Forum

Friday forum of this month was altered little bit into an interactive quiz competition on Nature and Environment. Mr. Vishnu, Intern Student with WWF-India, Kerala State Office led the programme. It was very informative and interactive.



Session on Nature Conservation and Environment Protection

A session on environmental protection was conducted by Education Officer at Mar Theophilus Training College, Thiruvananthapuram on 8th October. Sixty five Teacher Trainees participated in the programme. A slide show on birds was done by Mr. Biju.P.B, volunteer of WWF-India.



Nature Education Camp

The group of 37 students and teachers from Gujarat under the auspices of Valsad Divisional Office of WWF-India really enjoyed and understood Kerala's precious and unique natural resources during the six day long camp from 11th to 16th October organized by Kerala State Office covering Thenmala, Periyar Tiger Reserve, Eravikulam National Park and Vazhachal forests.

Teacher's Training Workshop on Environment Education

The sixth in the series of Teachers Training Workshop and the first targeting Teacher Trainees for

this academic year organized by WWF-India, Kerala State Office and supported by CPREEC, Chennai was held at Millath College of Teacher Education, Sooranad, Kollam on 23rd October. The workshop was inaugurated by Smt. Radhamony Amma, Principal of the college. Smt. Divya V., Nature Club Adviser welcomed the guests and participants. Sri. A.K.Sivakumar, Education Officer from WWF-India, Kerala State Office briefed on the background of the workshop and the organizations involved.

Technical sessions on the topic 'Environmental Education and school education' and 'Environmental problems of Kerala' were led by Sri. Abraham Thomas, Selection Grade Lecturer in Education, Peet Memorial Training College, Mavelikara and Mr. A.K.Sivakumar.



The post lunch session was based on two activities that sensitised the participants towards their role in Environment Education. The entire participants were divided into 6 teams and two teams were assigned to prepare a mini drama of five minutes duration on specific environmental problems. The remaining four teams were asked to find out the spots and stripes on living things within their campus and to note them with number. Changing lifestyle and food habits was the theme of the first drama and deforestation and pollution was the theme for the second one. The teams in the games listed 60-80 spots and stripes on living things within the given time frame of 30 minutes. Both the activities lifted the energy level of the workshop and made it highly interactive.

Awareness programme for kids on Nature Conservation

An interactive awareness session on Environment and Nature was done by the Education Officer at

Madavoor Central School, Kollam on 26th October. About 40 children attended the session.

Invited talk at Institute of Management in Government on 28th October 2009

State Director Mr. Renjan delivered a talk on 'Environmental Impact Assessment and its various aspects' to the officers from the various departments of the government who were participants of the week long training and capacity building program at IMG. Practical hands on session were also given. Education Officer Mr. Sivakumar delivered a multimedia presentation on "Natural Resource Management". The talk detailed on depleting natural resources and the issues and concerns with regard to natural resource management.

Nature Education Camp at Nellyyampathy

An open Nature Education Camp was organized for our supporters and well wishers at Nellyyampathy,



Palakkad from Oct 30 - Nov 1st 2009. The area is pristine forest of Nemmara taluk of Palakkad district with rich habitat and biodiversity. Evergreen, deciduous, semi evergreen and teak plantations also keeps the habitat varied. The base camp was the Thoothanpara Estate which is in the midst of forest and was acquired from the Poabson plantations after their lease period. The team experienced wonderful nature walks within the forest areas and had rich wildlife sightings and was treated to the sweet and melodious calls of a variety of birds. The camp was led by Mr. A.K. Sivakumar, and Mr.Biju P.B.

Paper presentation at Kerala University National Seminar on Environment and Development on 8th October, 2009

State Director Mr. Renjan delivered a paper presentation on Issues and Concerns with regard to Water Resource Management in the light of the WWF-India publication titled 'World's Top Ten Rivers at Risk'. The paper and presentation was highly appreciated by the participants of the seminar and there was very good interaction on the various recommendations given with regard to water resource management specifically for Kerala.

Release of caged animal (monkey) in Idukki

An animal lover from outside Kerala, recently on his visit to various tourist locations in Kerala with his family came across a wild monkey that had been kept chained and caged in a tourist resort in Idukki district to serve as a "tourist attraction". He explained the condition as 'a pitiful sight indeed'. This was brought to the attention of the Species and Landscape Programme of WWF-India and from there to the Kerala State Office. Immediately we took it up with Sri Thampi George, Local Co-ordinator and Sri M.N. Jayachandran, SPCA Idukki and they informed the Kerala Forests and Wildlife Department. When the Forest Department officials encountered the resort authorities and explained to them the significance of keeping such a wild animal caged and being convinced of the crime that they had unintentionally committed, immediately freed the animal. This incident still proves the level of ignorance in the minds of people with regard to wildlife, status of various species and their protection.



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Do You Know?

Manufacture, stocking, distribution, sale, use, transportation, collection, segregation, recycling and disposal of

- plastic carry bags of less than 20 x 30 cm
- plastic cups
- bottle
- packaging material
- plastic carry bag / Container made of halogenated material is **BANNED** in the State.

} less than
30 micron
thickness

Violation of

- manufacture, reuse, recycle may please be reported State Pollution Control Board / Police
- stocking, distribution, sale, use, transportation may please be reported to Local Authority / Police
- prohibition on transportation of banned articles into the State may please be reported to Commercial Taxes Department

Penalties

- handling of banned plastics upto 10,000 no. punishable under section 188 of I.P.C. attracting upto 1 month imprisonment or Rs. 200 fine or both
- handling of banned plastics greater than 10,000 no. punishable under the Environment (Protection) Act attracting upto 5 years imprisonment or Rs. 1 lakh fine or both and Rs. 5000 per day for continuing the violation



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