

MESSAGE

I regret my inability to be present in Chennai this morning on account of urgent work related to the GoM on Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster.

We are taking a very important step forward today by creating a National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Zone Management that will function in a Consortium mode. The anchor of this Consortium will be at Anna University, Chennai. There are 11 other participating institutions from all coastal states in the Consortium. In the context of climate change and the undisputable evidence now available on rise in mean sea levels, sustainable coastal zone management assumes special significance. By November this year, the Indian Network for Comprehensive Climate Change Assessment (INCCA) which has been set up by the Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoE&F) will come out with its first assessment of the impact of climate change on the coastal areas of our country.

We are spending a substantial amount of money to create this Consortium. The total investment is around Rs.166 crore. I want this expenditure to focus on capacity building, human resource development and actual research programmes with an outreach component to coastal communities. We should keep expenditure on buildings to the barest minimum. The linkage with coastal communities is especially important because too often in our country research is divorced from field-level conditions and challenges. The Consortium should also link up with the best institutions in the world and train a whole new generation of researchers in this area. India has extended a grant of \$ 1 million to the SAARC Coastal Zone Management Centre at Male in Maldives. The Consortium should also build close links with this Centre.

After an extensive process of public consultations and feedback, the MoE&F is now finalising the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification, 2010. We are also launching three integrated coastal zone management projects in West Bengal (Rs.300 crore), Orissa (Rs.200 crore) and Gujarat (Rs.300 crore). Similar projects in other coastal states will be taken up as we go along. For the first time, the Survey of India has also been tasked with the responsibility of delineating a hazard line along 7500 kms of India's coast, a task that will be completed in two years at a total cost of Rs 200 crore. The MoE&F has also moved decisively to protect coastal areas like Goa and the Western Ghats from further environmental degradation.

I send my best wishes to the National Consortium for Sustainable Coastal Zone Management.

Jairam Ramesh
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