

[News](#) » [States](#) » [Tamil Nadu](#)

Published: December 27, 2010 00:43 IST | Updated: December 27, 2010 00:43 IST

Bill to protect fisherfolk's traditional rights on anvil

Staff Reporter



The Hindu Union Minister for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh at the inauguration of the integrated mangrove fishery farming system in Vedaranyam, near Nagapattinam, on Sunday. Looking on is chairperson of the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation M. S. Swaminathan (second from left). Photo: B. Velankanni Raj

The Fisherfolks Rights Bill, guaranteeing traditional marine rights, is on the anvil, Union Minister for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh said on Sunday.

Conceived on the lines of the Forest Rights Act that guarantees traditional user rights and land rights to tribals, Adivasis and forest dwellers, this Bill would provide security of dwelling and habitation, apart from marine resources, to the 70-lakh fisherfolk living along the coastal areas. The draft text was posted on the Ministry's website and the Ministry was open to suggestions.

Mr. Ramesh was unveiling the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation-led integrated mangrove fishery farming system here.

Sea water as social resource

The initiative is an attempt to introduce "sea water as a social resource" where saline farming will thrive along with fishing practices.

The project envisages cultivation of salt-resistant vegetation such as mangroves and halophytes alongside aqua culture for, salinity-ravaged soil has made farming difficult.

Protection shield

Referring to the Vedaranyam Salt March led by Rajaji in April 1930 which was launched a week after Mahatma Gandhi ended his Dandi March, the Minister proposed an eco-restoration-cum-conservation project at the salt memorial. Cultivation of mangroves as protection shields and development of a genetic botanical garden for salt-resistant species were a component of the initiative.

Describing the endeavour as one that would generate round-the-year-livelihood, MSSRF chairperson M.S. Swaminathan said integrated fishery farming practices could prove beneficial to salt workers of Vedaranyam who had seasonal employment for just six months.

Four-fold objective

Tapas Paul, senior environmentalist, World Bank, said the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project aimed at reducing loss of coastal lives; protection of coastal lives and assets; conservation of coastal livelihoods; and sustainable management.

At present, West Bengal, Gujarat and Orissa were part of the project.

Scholarship

The MSSRF's Vedaranyam initiative would also constitute phase I of the project. A scholarship programme for three girls and two boys from the fishing community in each of the 13 coastal States was proposed.

The scholarships would be granted for university education in fisheries or coastal zone management studies.

Keywords: [Fisherfolks Rights Bill](#), [fishery farming](#), [Vedaranyam Salt March](#)