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Cities » **Chennai**

Keeping the marine ecosystem clean

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Joint effort: Volunteers cleaning the shore of Marina.   THE HINDU

The clean-up drive was part of the International Coastal Clean-up Day

Students from various colleges, volunteers from Indian Coast Guard Region (East), Tree Foundation's Sea Turtle Protection Force in association with South Asia's Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP), a United Nations Environment Programme, and Loyola College, came together to cleanup the Marina Beach to mark the 'International Coastal Clean-up Day' on Sept. 15.

With trash bags in their hands, they removed wastes such as plastic bags, bottles, and other materials strewn on the seashore. The drive was flagged off by Chief Wildlife Warden of Tamil Nadu R. Gunasekaran, in the presence of Indian Coast Guard Region (East), Director Inspector General B.K. Loshali, Dr. H. Malleshappa, Director, Department of Environment, Government of Tamil Nadu, Australia's Consul General in Chennai, David Holly, and Deputy Consul General Stuart Campbell.

Speaking on the occasion, Gunasekaran stressed on the need to keep the beaches clean.

"People should not litter garbage on the beach. They should ensure that beaches are kept neat and clean. An awareness has to be created among the public to avoid usage of plastic bags and about proper disposal of solid waste," S. Regha, Assistant Professor, Department of Bio-Technology, and Co-ordinator of Nature Club, Kumararani Meena Muthiah College (KRMCC) of Arts and Science, said.

"I come to the beach every week. I find it so dirty. I wanted to join this clean-up drive and make a small difference', said S. Ashok, one of the volunteers. "Regular clean-ups should be organised to keep Chennai beaches free of trash. Dustbins should be placed at strategic locations, and signboards should be installed to warn public against throwing garbage on beach," he added. P.K. Manivannan, a student says, "Students should be encouraged to take part in beach cleaning campaign, and know about the ill-effects of marine pollution. Plastic and other waste materials, when thrown into the marine ecosystem, gets absorbed into food webs, causing diseases, which is harmful to human beings as well as the entire food chain," he said.

Tree Foundation Chairperson, Dr. Supraja Dharini, said, "When a plastic bag floats on an ocean, it will look like a jellyfish to sea turtles and mammals. They can choke or starve to death with their stomachs filled with plastic. In order to spread awareness about the damage done by plastic to the marine wildlife and the environment, this clean-up is conducted each year."

Float flagged off

A 'Marine Life on Tour' float was flagged off from Marina Beach, which drove down through Anna Salai, Raj Bhavan and East Coast Road to create awareness among the public about the threats to the marine ecosystem through pollution, sewage and garbage.

Every year on September 15, volunteers around the world take part in the world's biggest coastal clean-up, known as the International Coastal Clean-up Day. The event has been held internationally each year for more than 20 years.

Since 1986, the International Coastal Clean-up (ICC) has included inland lakes, rivers, and streams in the clean-up, and nearly half a million people in more than 100 countries have participated in the clean-up.

Keywords: Indian Coast Guard Region (East), cleanup the Marina Beach, 'International Coastal Clean-up Day'