

'CLIMATE LITERACY PROGRAMME IS NEED OF THE HOUR'

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THE Tamil Nadu Green Climate Company, a special purpose vehicle, was created in October 2022 with the mission to enhance the forest and tree cover from 23.27% to 33% in 10 years' time, restore wetlands in the state and focus on climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. The TN Government allocated a fund of ₹5 crore as equity to fulfil the mission. This is a newly-floated company that will be steered by a 22-member Governing Council headed by the Chief Minister. Similarly, the Greater Chennai Corporation has also initiated the City Climate Action Plan (CAPS) to bring together a holistic approach to urban development, bringing the entire range of urban development challenges under one umbrella.

The key pillars of Climate Action Plan seem to be calculating GHG emission – mitigation measures and assessing climate change risk and its impact.

A troubling question? What kind of capacity, institutions and institutional coordination do we currently have to see through the implementation of

FOOTNOTE

these climate action plans? Building institutional capacity to address the issues concerning climate mitigation and adaptation and to make the city climate resilient is very critical. Moreover, can these climate action programmes be implemented in isolation without people's participation and without raising the awareness lev-

els, particularly among students? Indeed, every one of us should be concerned and engaged in climate mitigation and adaptation measures. This warrants a comprehensive climate literacy programme and campaign at all levels in the society. Perhaps, one could even start this programme from elementary schools up to industrial houses.

What is the essence and purpose of climate literacy and campaign?

Although climate change as an issue is widely talked about, the subject still has not reached a vast majority of the population. A simple and straightforward question: How many people have heard/read and understood the IPCC reports and COP (27) meetings? There is a lot of jargon used extensively such as net zero emission, tipping points, energy balance

Sooner than you think

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etc. How many people understand the core meaning and impact of these jargons? Do people know that earth is already impacted by a warming world? Even the educated urban elites think the climate change impact is about a century away! But the fact of the matter is that a few of the tipping points are just nine or 10 years away! If this is the climate literacy status of the top 5-10% of the Indian population, imagine the level of awareness among the rest of the population.

What should be the model of climate campaign? Every elected representative should be officially designated as the climate leader in his/her constituency, and can identify qualified climate champions to engage in climate literacy and outreach programs. The CM should be the State Climate Leader.

It is important that campaigns should start from schools and colleges: What are the issues to be covered to impart training and build capacities of students? Increasing temperature levels and its impact on productivity decline; Impact of climate extreme events such as super cyclones, decreasing number of rainy days and the impact on unforeseen floods; Sea-level rise, storm surges, coastal erosion; Necessity of conserving water in waterbodies such as tanks and ponds with a view to miti-

gate severe drought conditions and so on. Most importantly, students should be taught about the absolute need to protect water bodies, wetlands, build greeneries, grasslands, plant trees and increase area under dense forests as a set of measures to reduce the impact of temperature rise, to reduce emission levels as well as and to protect wildlife and biodiversity. Further, rainwater harvesting should be promoted in all towns and villages: The slogan should be, "the water that falls on your roof, on your land and in your village is your water and it's your responsibility to store that water".

All these, however, warrant for building capacities of government officers at all levels, teachers, elected representatives and several other stakeholders.

Such measures are necessary only to ensure that the State and the National Climate Actions Plans and Programmes yield desirable results. We need to acknowledge the fact that the present condition is such that "it is now or never situation". The slogan for the students and for the common men ought to be, "know more and no more neglect". Let us start the Climate Literacy programme now: Better late than never.

Footnote is a weekly column that discusses issues relating to Tamil Nadu



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