

Forest Dept. to digitise management of Village Forest Councils

A training programme was held for 45 Forest Range Officers of Tiruchi Circle involved in the Tamil Nadu Afforestation Programme on the benefits of the initiative

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THE HINDU BUREAU

The Forest Department has planned to digitise the management of the Village Forest Councils (VFC) comprising the local community in Tiruchi Forest Circle to improve the efficiency of the grass-roots level work.

Encompassing Tiruchi, Ariyalur, Perambalur, Pudukottai, Thanjavur, Nagapattinam, Tiruvarur and Mayiladuthurai districts, the Tiruchi Forest Circle has 219 VFCs that were formed under the Tamil Nadu Afforestation Programme (TAP) in phases over the years.

A VFC includes people living in villages on the forest fringes and its main mission is to restore degraded forests through joint forest management and share with them sustainable benefits besides providing them micro-credits to facilitate their livelihood improvements and meet their basic requirements. The

Forest Range Officer concerned is the member-secretary of the VFC which has five to 15 members with a joint account opened in a local bank or the nearest post office.

The move to digitise the management of the VFCs is expected to revitalise their functioning and increase the department's engagement with the people, said a senior official. The exercise is being planned by creating a centralised portal. The plan is to digitise all records or accounts of the VFCs to improve transparency and partnership with the village level councils and improve forest management.

Ahead of implementing the programme under e-governance, the department organised a training programme for field-level Forest Ranger Officers in Tiruchi on Friday. The programme was attended by 45 Forest Range Officers of Tiruchi Circle involved in the TAP. N. Satish, Chief Conservator of Forests, Tiruchi Circle, explained the features of digitisation to the participants in the training programme.

S. Krithiga, District Forest Officer, Tiruchi, organised the programme. Anbu, Eco Development Officer, Kalakkad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve and a representative from a non-governmental organisation, conducted the training.