

'People's participation vital to protect environment'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Pune: Wildlife scientist AJT Johnsingh said on Saturday that people's participation would play a vital role in conservation of environment and wildlife. He emphasised the need to grow more trees to reduce pressure on existing forests and protected areas.

Johnsingh was honoured with the Vasundhara Sanman award at the concluding session of the eighth edition of the Kirloskar Vasundhara International Film Festival in the city.

Speaking to reporters, he said, "Everybody should contribute towards environment conservation; the government alone cannot do everything to protect forests and wildlife. We need to plant more trees and protect them. Cities will have to protect their green cover, while in rural parts, farmers will have to grow trees along farm land. Even politicians will have to plan pro-conservation steps," he said.

Johnsingh said that the consistent population growth has increased pressure on the environment. "Given the existing growth rate, the country's population could soon exceed that of China. We need to adopt measures to check population."

He said that the country also faced a serious challenge of degradation of habitats owing to erratic weather conditions. Recent landslides in Uttarakhand and floods were examples of sudden changes in weather, he said.

Johnsingh said that despite constraints, the country was doing well in wildlife conservation, but stressed that the momentum needed to be maintained.

Wildlife activist Samad Kottur said that encroachment on forest areas was the biggest threat and required urgent atten-

Sugar mill owner bats for drip irrigation

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Pune: The implementation of drip irrigation in sugarcane farms will not only help cut water consumption, but will also increase yield per hectare, said VB Thombare, owner of a sugar mill in Osmanabad district, at a press conference in the city, on Friday.

"Micro irrigation system was installed in my fields some seven years ago. We are very happy with the results. The yield per hectare increased while the consumption of water went down significantly," said Thombare, who is in the city to attend the 8th Kirloskar Vasundhara International Film Festival.

The state government has been planning to make drip irrigation compulsory for sugarcane farmers to increase groundwater level, which has been going down drastically across the state, primarily due to sugarcane cultivation.

Thombare said that one hectare of land growing sugarcane usually requires 150 lakh litre of water. But with the drip irrigation system, consumption is cut down by 50% and the crop can do well with only 75 lakh litre of water. "Farmers also benefit because the yield increases from about 75-80 tonne to 120 tonne per hectare," he added.

tion. Declaring forest areas as protected zones could curb encroachments to some extent. Local residents need to be given

Thombare said he would want all sugarcane farmers to switch to drip irrigation. "The industry should employ other green practices such as generating electricity from molasses and recycling water from crushing sugarcane back into the plant. We have done it successfully," he said.

Add another 'R' to mantra: Sane

Green crusader Hema Sane was all praise for organizers of Kirloskar Vasundhara International Film Festival for modifying the slogan 'reduce, reuse, recycle' and adding 'refuse' and 'restore'.

But Sane said that another 'R' is missing. "I think it is time we added another 'R' - respect. We should look at our past and see how we valued the environment then. We need to go back to respecting our environment in the same way," she said.

Sane, who advocates conservation of energy and lives in a home without an electricity connection, said that she learnt how to live this way from her parents. "Four generations of our family have been living in that house and we do not miss out on things because we do not have an electricity connection," Sane said.

proper guidance to stop deforestation and activities that have an adverse impact on environment and wildlife, Kottur said.