

India and Norway to conduct marine spatial planning in Lakshadweep and Puducherry

New Delhi, March 03 (India Science Wire): India and Norway have agreed to jointly work in the area of marine spatial planning (MSP). This is a part of the Indo-Norway Integrated Ocean Initiative taken up under a Memorandum of Understanding signed between the two countries in 2019.

The Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), Govt. of India, will implement the programme through its National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR). MSP is globally identified as a tool for sustainable and integrated ocean management. In its primary phase, NCCR will develop a marine spatial planning framework for Puducherry and Lakshadweep.

These sites have been chosen for the pilot project in view of their setups with unique growth opportunities for multiple sectors such as industries, fisheries, and tourism. The Government of India's initial investments for undertaking the studies and planning are estimated to be around Rs. 8-10 crores per annum. The framework developed for the two sites will be replicated in other coastal regions of the country in due course.

Announcing this, an official press release noted that the World Bank and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have expressed interest in supporting the programme as it will have immense societal benefits for India's coastal regions.

NCCR had earlier developed coastal management plans for Chennai, Goa, and Gulf of Kutch which proved very successful. Now, the MSP initiative will aid the development of multiple economic sectors and stakeholders in the coastal areas of the country.

The first project steering committee meeting for the programme was conducted with representatives from both countries recently. As a follow up, the two countries have charted out a plan to ensure that human activities at sea take place in an efficient, safe, and sustainable manner in areas such as energy, transportation, fisheries, aquaculture, and tourism.

The meeting was attended by representatives from other stakeholder ministries - Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change; Ministry of External Affairs; Ministry of Shipping; Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying; Ministry of Tourism; and state governments of Tamil Nadu and Lakshadweep, besides MoES.

The Government of India's vision of New India by 2030 highlights the 'blue economy' as one of the ten core dimensions of growth. MSP is a noted area for work in India's draft Blue Economic Policy being developed by the MoES.

keywords: marine spatial planning, Ocean, MoES, National Centre for Coastal Research, NCCR, pilot, industries, fisheries, tourism, framework, sustainable, World Bank, United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP, Chennai, Goa, Gulf of Kachchh, energy, transportation, aquaculture, blue economy, growth. (India Science Wire)

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