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Jairam moots Fishermen Rights Act

PURI: Like the Forest Rights Act ensuring rights of the tribals and primitive groups, the Centre is planning a new enactment - the Fishermen Rights Act - to protect the interests of traditional fishermen, said Minister of State for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh, here today.

He was speaking at a consultation meet with the communities living close to the sea, particularly the fishermen, as part of the nationwide move to hold consultation with all the stakeholders in the coastal region of the country before giving final touches to the new Integrated Coastal Management Act (ICMA). Ramesh said the Ministry has made stringent environment norms for the scores of new ports coming up, including ones in Orissa.

The Institute of Ocean Management, Chennai, has been asked to make an impact assessment in relation to effect on livelihood of traditional fishermen and soil erosion because of opening of new ports before endorsing clearance of the proposal. There will be satellite survey of the coastline to demarcate the volatile line along the coast in order to prevent loss of lives and property besides taking measures to preserve and protect the coast," he informed.

Such consultation camps were held in Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai while more such meetings are slated in Gujarat, Kerala, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. The exercise is being done to ascertain the ground realities before preparing the final draft of the Integrated Coastal Management Act to be tabled in Parliament. The Act would help deal with violators of Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) norms.

The Ministry has approached the World Bank with a Rs 1,200 crore project proposal for a detailed survey of the coastal area of the country. Orissa would get Rs 227 crore for its coastal zone plan.

The survey is scheduled for completion by January next, the Minister added. No sea wall or geo synthetic pipe lines would be laid before conclusion of the survey. The Chilika Development Authority (CDA) would execute the project in five years in the State, he added. Till date, around 8,000 structures built on the coast against the CRZ norms have been identified through satellite. Today's consultation programme was organised by the Centre for Environment Education (CEE) and Green Peace.

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